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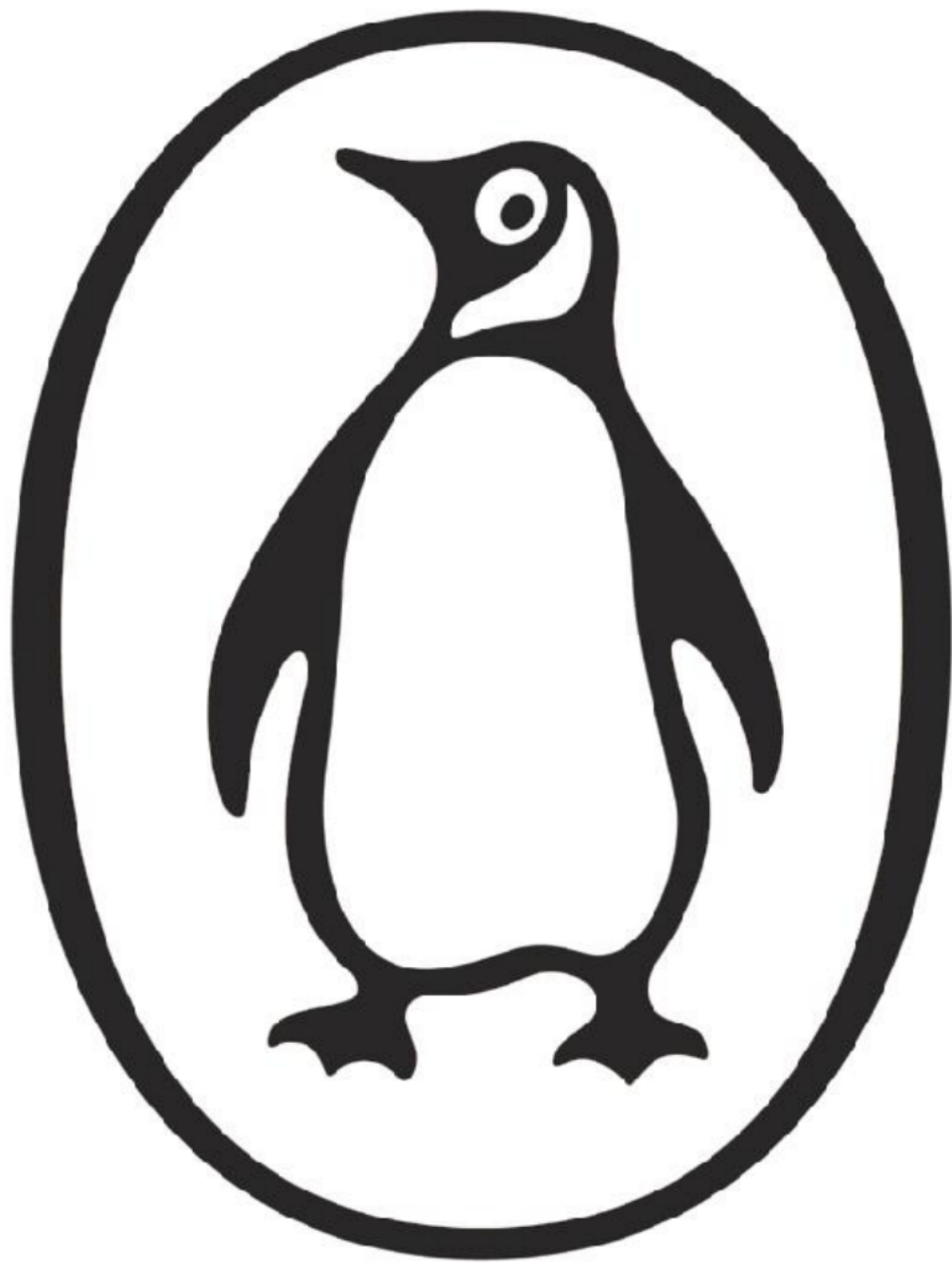
In honor of beloved Virgil —

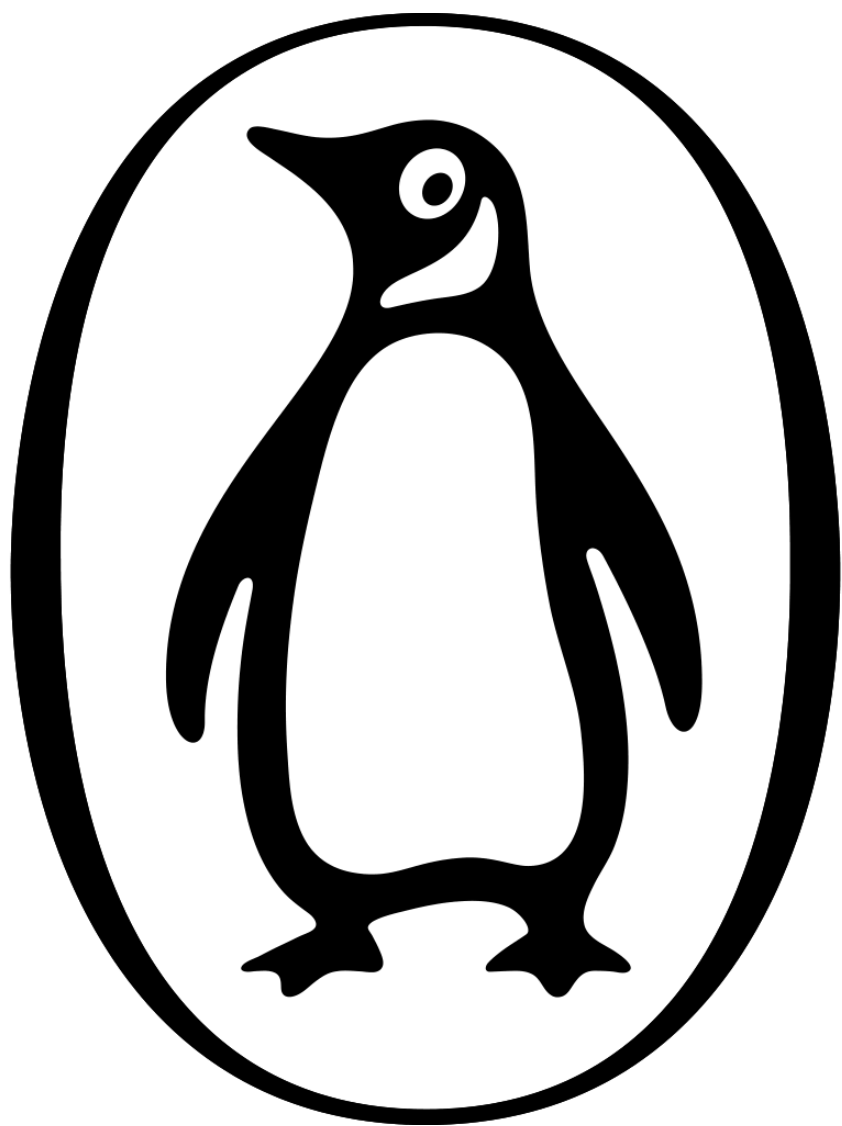
“O degli altri poeti onore e lume . . .”

—Dante, *Inferno*

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## CATULLUS

ADVISORY EDITOR: BETTY RADICE

Of the few facts known about the life of GAIUS VALERIUS CATULLUS even the dates of birth and death are uncertain, but he was probably born in 84 B.C. The son of a wealthy citizen of Verona, either he or his family owned a villa on Lake Garda, but in Poem 68 he describes Rome as his home and says that his life was passed there. He writes as a friend of Cicero and other leading figures and appears as a leader of the new movement in poetry and a lover of the notorious Clodia Metelli, who was probably the Lesbia of the poems. In 57 he travelled as one of C. Memmius Gemellus's suite to Bithynia, where he visited his brother's grave. He started writing in 69 or 68 but, after his death in about 54 B.C., his work was all but lost for a thousand years.

PETER WHIGHAM was self-educated and, since his first job as a gardener in the Wye Valley, had been successively a schoolmaster, an actor in provincial repertory, a reporter for a mid-Wales newspaper, a schoolmaster again, and a free-lance script writer for the B.B.C. In the early sixties he moved to Italy to devote himself entirely to writing. Largely as a result of his Catullus translations he was invited to give courses in verse composition at the University of California, where he stayed for two years. Until his death in 1987, he lived in the East bay area of San Francisco. His other publications include *The Blue Winged Bee* (Poetry Book Society Choice for Spring 1969) and *ASTAPOVO or What We Are To Do*, both from Anvil Press Poetry, London. Peter Whigham's *The Poems of Catullus* has also been published in a bilingual edition by the University of California Press.

**CATULLUS**

**The Poems**

*Translated with an Introduction by*

**PETER WHIGHAM**

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TO THE MEMORY OF

**WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOME of the poems originally appeared in *Artisan*, *The National Review*, *Agenda* and *Arion*, to whose editors I am indebted for permission to reprint them. Some also appeared in *Clear Lake Comes from Enjoyment*, Neville Spearman, 1959. Poem 61 was first printed in *The Marriage Rite*, The Ditchling Press, 1960. Both these books were written in collaboration with Denis Goacher.

In the specialised field of Catullan studies my debts are too widespread and diverse to be easily enumerated here. I can only hope that the book itself may in some sort prove a recompense for what I have pillaged from those more learned than myself. Unfortunately, C.J. Fordyce's *Catullus* (1961) did not appear until my work was more than half completed, but I have made what use of it I could. Burton and Smithers' curious but stimulating volume has been with me from the time when I began to make my first versions. Munro's *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus* (1878) and Robinson Ellis's Oxford Text, together with his *Commentary on Catullus* (2nd edn., 1889), have been my principal guides textually and exegetically. I have also used the texts of S. G. Owen (1893), Arthur Palmer (1896) and J. P. Postgate (1889). Mueller's text (1885) is of course incorporated in the Burton and Smithers volume. Salvatore Quasimodo's selected translation and Carlo Saggio's complete one have been an invaluable stimulus. I have also been helped by Ferrero's two studies (both Turin, 1955) and, perhaps most of all, by Noel's two-volume work: *Catulle* (An. XI – 1803), a fund of Renaissance and post-Renaissance lore on the subject of Catullus. From Landor's work as a whole, and the second volume of his *Longer Prose Works* (Crump, edn. 1893) in particular, I have derived valuable, if somewhat idiosyncratic, insights. Finally, there has been my old edition (1797) of Lemprière, and Carnevale's *Roma Nel III' Secolo* (1896).

A year or so before his death, William Carlos Williams had some of these poems read to him. He handed them around among his friends. Not only his example as a poet but this practical encouragement of his as a master was a great help to me at a time when the book might well have been left in an incomplete state: *'hoc tibi, quod potui,*

*confectum carmine munus/ pro multis, Alli, redditur officiis...’.*

Wine stains the verse;  
the curse of time obliterates the arrogant line.

Then, in Verona, Campesani knows  
the 'Roman hand':  
"One woman could command  
this song."

He sang  
and fourteen hundred years  
later, it reappears –  
    in the barrel's bung  
(the hand that Campesani knows)  
codex from wine-bung springing,  
as from the dung  
    – the rose.

# INTRODUCTION

WE know very little about Catullus's life: even the dates of his birth and death are uncertain. The likeliest figures are: born 84, died 54 B.C. His full name was Gaius Valerius Catullus. His father was a citizen of Verona and apparently of sufficient eminence to entertain Julius Caesar in his house. Either Catullus, or his family, owned a villa on the Sirmio peninsula on Lake Garda, about thirty miles west of Verona. We do not know where Catullus had his schooling, nor anything about his family, except that he had a brother who died before him. In poem 68 he tells us that already, at the age of 15 or 16, he had had his first experiences of love and, by implication, of poetry. In the same poem he describes Rome as his home and says that his life is passed there. We do not know when he left Verona, nor when he arrived in Rome nor where he lived when he was there. He speaks of a villa near Tivoli, but he must have had a town house as well. He constantly complains of being short of money, although he never seems wholly serious about this. He writes as a friend of Cicero and of many of the most distinguished figures of his day. He displays an aversion – again, less than completely serious – for Caesar and various members of his faction. He appears as one of the lovers of the notorious Clodia Metelli, and a leading figure – perhaps *the* leading figure – in the new movement in poetry. Sometime before 57 or 56 B.C. his brother must have died and been buried in the Troad, for it was in 57 that he, and probably his friend Gaius Cinna, accompanied C. Memmius Gemellus to Bithynia as members of his suite, and, according to the evidence of poem 101, Catullus paid a visit to his brother's grave when he was out there. A governor's term of office normally lasted a year, which means that poem 46 can be placed in the following spring when, if poem 4 is to be taken literally, Catullus returned to Italy in his own yacht, one that he had either bought, or perhaps had made, for the occasion. He appears to have sailed up the Adriatic and thence up the Po and the Mincio, or the Adige, to within a short distance of Lake Garda. The yacht was probably hauled the last few miles overland. In the poem, it is described as 'dedicated to quiet age', as though it were drawn up out of the water under the terrace of

Catullus's villa, a memento to his eastern travels. There is no harm, however, in supposing that he still used it for sailing on the lake and entertaining the friends who visited him from Verona, or perhaps from Rome. Since poem 11 appears to contain a reference to Caesar's expeditions to Britain, it has been placed as late as 55 or 54 B.C. This would mean that he resumed his relationship with Lesbia after his return from Bithynia. The poem is often referred to as the last poem he addressed to her. But there is little direct evidence to support this. There is nothing to indicate that it comes after poems 107 or 109. Poem 10, one of his gayest and most light-hearted pieces of *boulevardierie*, also dates from this period. In short, the tradition that he died of what our grandmothers called 'a broken heart' finds no support in the poems. It is based solely on the assumption that his love for Clodia was of the conventional type of romantic – i.e. 'fatal' – passion. But I believe that many of the poems point to an altogether different and more complicated state of mind. All we can say for certain about his death is, that like his birth, it happened. He walks out of history, off the Roman scene, and in a very short while his book – or, more likely, his books – follow him, to be lost, to all effective purpose, for a thousand years. This, or something very like it, is the most we can say we know with reasonable certitude. The rest is conjecture, more or less plausible, and more or less harmful.

The conjecture starts, and, for the most part ends, with the dating of the poems from internal evidence. This provides a framework for an inferential web of motives and personal relations. Something like a biography in embryo begins to take shape. But poetry is not like history, and for a poet to say he has done this, or felt that, is about as unsure an indication as one would wish to have that he has in fact done the one or felt the other. Besides which, studies such as these are all too often used as a substitute for poetic understanding, rather than as an aid to it; and this is especially true of the Classics. Of course, any relic of a past civilisation has an extrinsic interest as part of a whole which it is the scholar's perfectly legitimate business to reassemble. From this point of view, no one can be anything but grateful for the labour that has gone into uncovering the minutiae of dates, deaths, offices and the cross-currents of relationships among Catullus's circle. However, in a volume devoted to the interpretation of his poetry, such findings should not be allowed to assume too great an importance: their true position is that of footnotes for the archaeologically curious. With this caveat in mind, it is with a certain amount of caution that I proceed to fill in as much of the historical background as seems to me more or less relevant, and that will allow me to move on to the dubious, and somewhat unfashionable, ground of biographical conjecture.

It is only reasonable to assume (the phrase is the King Charles's Head of Catullan biography) that the Lesbia of Catullus's poems was Clodia Metelli. There is plenty of circumstantial evidence to support the identification, and nothing against it but the caution of scholars. She was the wife of Q. Metellus Celer, her cousin on her mother's side, and they lived in the Clivus Victoriae on the Palatine, the oldest and most exclusive residential area in the city. Celer was an old-fashioned if, apparently, able politician. He was a supporter of Cicero and the Senatorial party and was Roman praetor in the year of Cicero's consulship, which was also the year of the Catiline rebellion. After he had lost the consulship to Cicero, Catiline planned to have him assassinated; but the conspiracy failed and he fled to Etruria, where an army of malcontents left over from the Sullan proscription (freedmen, known from their liberator as *Cornelii*) was waiting for him. Gaius Antonius, Mark Antony's uncle, who had been elected to the consulship with Cicero, was sent to face the rebels from the south, while Metellus Celer, who on relinquishing his praetorship had been appointed Governor of Cisalpine Gaul; was despatched to Picenum, a district on the north-west coast of the Adriatic, where he was to raise troops, cross the Po and prevent the rebels retreating through the Alps. Antonius, who had originally supported the conspirators, declined at the last moment to lead his forces into battle, and it was actually his second-in-command, Marcus Petreius, who defeated and slew Catiline in the midwinter of that year (63–62), at Pistoria, the modern Pistoia, near Florence. Those of Catiline's followers who fled northwards across the Po and fell into Metellus Celer's hands were dealt with summarily as traitors. Celer remained in Cisalpine Gaul through the spring, summer and possibly autumn of 62. We do not know when he returned to Rome, but it would certainly not have been before his term of office was up. The province must, presumably, have been in a state of some unrest, with dissident elements using it as an escape route from the south. There is, of course, no proof that he visited, or even knew, Catullus's father; but the circle of influential or otherwise important people in a provincial capital is necessarily small. He had been of use to Caesar. (It is difficult to imagine Caesar using his house unless he was.) And he could presumably be of similar service to the new Provincial Governor, who would certainly need help and advice from local dignitaries. If Catullus had not yet left for Rome this could well have been the source of his introduction to the circle of writers, lawyers, politicians and well-bred opportunists who surrounded Metellus Celer's wife. It is almost certain\* that Catullus's liaison with Clodia began before her husband's death; and that was not far ahead. At whatever date the Governor left the province, he must have been in Rome well before his election as consul in 60 B.C.

By the spring of 59 he was dead.

The cause of his death is unknown; but it was common talk that he had been poisoned by Clodia herself- as it was that she had committed incest with her brother, Publius Clodius, who had a house near hers on the Palatine. It would appear that, during her husband's absence as Provincial Governor, Clodia's behaviour had become something more than a private scandal. Our source is Cicero's *Pro Caelio*. It is the only full-length picture of her, apart from what we are able to piece together from Catullus's poems; and it is a vicious onslaught, Publius Clodius had accused Marcus Caelius of being involved in the Catiline conspiracy and having seduced his sister. Cicero and Clodius were bitter enemies. The more violent of Caesar's faction felt that Cicero had betrayed them by going over to the Senatorial cause on his accession to the consulship. The charge was in fact true. But on top of this, Marcus Caelius was by way of being one of Cicero's more favoured pupils in the law courts. He had certainly been accepted – and later rejected – by Clodia as a lover; but to suggest that her honour had been impugned, and that restitution was therefore necessary, was ridiculous. Both the charge itself, and the ready defence by Cicero, were undoubtedly the result of the personal antagonism between the two men. The round went to Cicero. Marcus Caelius was acquitted, and the speech securing his acquittal was one of the most skilful and impassioned that Cicero ever made. Whether it gives a true, or even a just, picture of Clodia, is another matter. I do not believe that it does.

Cicero also lived in the Clivus Victoriae. The brilliant salons that one imagines Clodia to have held for the more attractive and interesting members of the popular party took place a few doors from his house. He did not have to rely on gossip to know the sort of power she was capable of wielding, or the influence she could exert. He knew, as a former colleague, the men who surrounded her. And the way he chose to destroy her was to make her appear ridiculous. This is something that Catullus, even in his fiercest moments, never does. Perhaps from Cicero's point of view she *was* ridiculous. He was certainly ill-equipped, temperamentally and as a man, to understand a woman of her sort. But more than this, she and her circle stood for a loosening of certain of the old values and, implicitly, a readjustment of woman's place in society. The ideal of the Greek *hetæra* was alien to Rome, and not one that Cicero could be expected to welcome. He had staked his career on the survival of the old ways and the predominance of the old aristocracy. To such a person, Clodia – or her example – might well have appeared less ridiculous than dangerous; and this would have been an added inducement to Cicero to take up the case. Whether or not he succeeded in destroying her, he certainly



seems to have silenced her, for it is curious that after the trial she is to all intents and purposes never heard of again. She may have remarried and become a respectable Roman matron; she may have taken up permanent residence on a country estate. She may simply have died. Her exit is as enigmatic as Catullus's.

There is a theory that poem 49, in which Catullus thanks Cicero for some unspecified favour, refers to the *Pro Caelio* speech. It is possible, but, if true, was a short-sighted reaction on Catullus's part. Cicero's Clodia leaves us with little sympathy for anyone who should be so foolish – or tasteless – as to fall in love with her. The Clodia of the poems, taking the cycle as a whole, is worth the worst she can do to a man. Catullus may wish his experience at an end; he never regrets having had it. When Cicero speaks of Clodia he does so as a judge in the divorce courts faced with a particularly 'distasteful' case. There are few things men would sooner listen to than accounts of the scandalous behaviour of noble women, provided they themselves can remain at an unembarrassing distance and are thus free to express the moral judgements of their mood. It would be pleasant to think that our forefathers were more culpable in this respect than we are. At any rate, Cicero's words have proved as potent as Catullus's, and the disdain of his *Pro Caelio* speech finds its echo in Noel's eighteenth-century French, but tintured with the permissive smile of the voyeur.

*'Libre alors, elle donna, sans pudeur, carrière à tous ses goûts, et porta le mépris du blâme public, jusqu'à louer un jardin sur les rives du Tibre, pour choisir parmi les baigneurs ceux qui promettaient le plus à sa fougue érotique.'*

Whatever her real nature, this was the woman who had more effect on Catullus's life than perhaps anyone else. Nor is it necessary to admit to a conventionally 'romantic' relationship to recognise that he speaks to her in an altogether different and more disturbing tone from that in which he addresses the other women in his poems. When I come to discuss the *Attis* (poem 63), I shall try to show that it was precisely her forceful and sexually dominating character that attracted him. Which was exactly what repelled Cicero.

Finally, the question has to be faced whether she did in fact become a public prostitute. That Cicero should have said she behaved like one need mean little more than that, like the divorce court judge, he disapproved of her morals. Nor, except for two poems, would there be any need to take Catullus's own words very seriously. The forms which a man's feelings of self-disgust take when a woman's demands outstrip his abilities are familiar to most of us. But poems 37 and 58 do not readily lend themselves to such an interpretation. They are too specific.

The answer, I believe, lies in the peculiar and not uncommon vice of the well-born, the rich and the secure: the desire for low-life, poverty and insecurity. Poem 58 seems to me perfectly explicable on the assumption that Clodia was the victim of *nostalgie de la boue*. She would not be the first well-brought-up young, or not so young, woman who has gone and stood on the street corners for kicks, not quite knowing herself how serious she was. But there is more to the poem than that. The ‘cross-roads and back-alleys’ of line 4 sound considerably less attractive than the elegance of Tiber-fringed gardens. The tradition being that she declined from the one to the other – a lesson to us all. But ‘scions of Remus’, which is the literal meaning of ‘*Remi nepotes*’, is significant. It doesn’t really read as though she took on all-comers. And ‘*glubit*’ is odd, meaning to rub the husk off an ear of corn, and hence to masturbate. It does not imply full sexual relations, and it is not difficult to imagine the sort of squalid, and basically imitative, charade that she and some of her male friends may have indulged in. Perhaps the most striking thing in the whole poem is the violent juxtaposition of the words ‘*glubit*’ and ‘*magnanimi*’ in the last line. The effect is as though one should say in English that a man was ‘pissed under the stars’. It is a fine rhetorical device, and one that I was not able fully to capture in my translation. Instead, I tried for an additional effect of my own, which was to broaden the implied irony by retaining the actual word ‘magnanimous’, though with its different meaning in English. The interesting point is that the depth of feeling in the poem comes in the first three lines, with their repetitions and shifting caesurae. Not at the end where one might expect it. The comparable lines in poem 11 (17–20) strike a much harsher and more despairing note. Beside them, ‘*glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes*’ is like a rocket exploding.

There remains the evidence of poem 37. According to a plain reading of the text, Clodia was to be found in a tavern described as ‘salacious’ and frequented by the riff-raff of the town, who went there to enjoy her favours. The tavern in question is said to be ‘nine pillars from the Temple of the Dioscuri’. The word used for ‘pillar’ is ‘*pila*’, which refers specifically to a small pillar supporting a shop or booth. *Columna* served for the grander, more ornamental affair. Thus Catullus seems to have been indicating that one should count the number of brothels, or low drinking-dens, from the Temple of the Dioscuri. (This is a distinction that I have not been able to make clear in my version.) When I read the poem at first, I thought that this was all that I needed to know, and that I understood Catullus’s directions. For the rest, I was prepared to take the poem in the same general sense as 58. But when I came to translate it I realised that there was a puzzle in the expression, ‘from the Temple of the Dioscuri’. Why the Dioscuri? It

told one nothing, for there was no indication in which direction one was to proceed. One could cross the Forum, in one corner of which the Temple stood. Or go down the Via Nova, beside it; or the Vicus Tuscus, behind it. It was not until one day when I was hunting for odds and ends of information about ancient Rome and turning the pages of Carnevale's *Roma Nel III<sup>e</sup> Secolo Dell'era Volgare* (1896), a remarkably thorough survey of the Roman antiquities then known, that I saw what I should have seen from the beginning, that the mention of the Temple of the Dioscuri was a direct reference to Publius Clodius who, as is well known, used it as a centre from which to deliver his harangues and to create public disorders. The direction now read, 'so many disreputable houses from the favourite stamping ground of Clodius and his henchmen, you will find another disreputable house, where Clodia... etc.' Evidently, either Clodia's or Clodius's own house is intended. There is no means of knowing which. A reference to a map of ancient Rome will show that the Clivus Victoriae runs from the Via Nova up the Palatine, beginning almost opposite the Temple of the Dioscuri. We are no longer required to believe that Clodia lived in a brothel.

If I seem to have laboured this point it is because I believe that the solution that I have offered is less inherently unlikely than that a woman of her background and, from what we can understand of the poems, of her sexual temperament, became in reality and earnest a prostitute. The question will always remain open, and to an extent hinges on what we understand by the word 'prostitute'. After all, for Cicero a *hetæra* was a prostitute, and in his opinion Clodia had stooped to become a form of *hetæra*. For Catullus, if she slept with another man, she was a prostitute. It may be asked, what chance did the woman have?

The date of Catullus's introduction into Roman society is of interest in helping to assess how much of his younger, formative life was spent in what he refers to as 'the province'. It is, unfortunately, likely to remain an unsolved query. If Metellus Celer was responsible, Catullus would not be likely to have left home before the spring of 62. On the other hand, his father, who must have been a wealthy man, was probably just as capable of arranging the matter for himself. In which case, there is no knowing when he left. There is a third alternative – of no help from the point of view of dates, but worth considering for other reasons. It is not impossible that he was provided with introductions to Roman literary circles by Publius Valerius Cato, the Veronese teacher, poet and critic, known not only to Catullus but to at least three other of the 'new poets', Tigidas, Gaius Cinna and Furius Bibaculus, all Cisalpines and all, at one time or another, pupils of his. It is likely, but unprovable, that Catullus was another. Cato was the

author of a work on grammar, now lost, and probably of a poem called *Dirae*, which is still extant. A line of China's refers to a poem called *Diana*, and a line of Tigidas', although not quite so certainly, to one called *Lydia*. Bibaculus speaks of him as though he were not only a master but an exemplar. He calls him 'the sole maker of poets', and laments the poverty of so discerning an individual. The warmth and personal element in Bibaculus's tributes, together with Catullus's poem (56), give us a hint of the mingled feelings of equality and respect which these men seem to have felt for him. If, as most scholars believe, Cato was the moving force behind the 'new poets', it would help to explain the number of Cisalpines among them. It would also explain, perhaps, something of the urgency and iconoclasm – although that word may be too strong – that they brought to their work. It would be misleading to suggest that, because they came from across the Po, an area which had not yet acquired full Roman status, they were what we should call 'provincials'. But there would be a freshness about them, and this – as in the case of Catullus – would give a bite to their Roman manners. Cato himself outlived all his pupils, dying as late as 25 B. C., only eight or nine years before Propertius, whose work, if he read it, he must certainly have approved of.

When we speak of the 'new poets' and the inspiration they derived from Cato, it should be remembered that we are in effect speaking of the work of Catullus and a tradition about Cato. The surviving fragments of the works of Calvus, Cinna, Cornificius, Bibaculus and Tigidas occupy barely three pages of print. Fortunately, in at least ten of his poems Catullus gives some very direct indications of what he and his friends felt about poetry, what their prejudices were and what they expected from it. Most of these poems are written to fellow poets and cast in the form of imaginary letters. (Catullus was fond of this convention: the opening lines of poem 13 follow the actual wording of a formal invitation to dinner.) Some of these 'letters' promise, or enclose, or make excuses for not enclosing translations of Greek models. Others are humorously abusive of poets of whom Catullus disapproves. Others are tributes to friends. We gather that the followers of the old-fashioned tradition of Roman epic were not popular with the 'new poets'; that long-windedness was to be avoided, and anything pompous, stilted or affected. We are told, or it is implied, that gaiety should be a concomitant of the arts, that the psychological and personal approach was to be preferred to the formal or public one, and that elegance (*venustas*), taste and learning (*doctrina*), were among a poet's most precious jewels. Perhaps the most illuminating poem of this genre is No. 50, where we see Calvus and Catullus, like any two poets who are also friends, playing at poetry together. We are aware that their poetry was a very close part

of their lives. This was something new in Roman letters.

There is always the danger that the literary historian will invest the past with a more or less spurious unity. Life, we feel, is more haphazard than most biographers or historians would like it to appear. The documentary evidence for the idea that there was a new movement at all rests on three brief passages of Cicero, in one of which appears the term 'new poets' – and, as an ironic allusion to their literary ancestry, 'new poets' is written in Greek. To some people this has seemed insufficient proof of the existence of a literary movement, and they have consequently denied that the so-called 'new poets' worked together or formed a school. And yet one of the strongest impressions left from a reading of the dozen or so poems mentioned above is that Catullus, and the other writers with whom he mixed, felt themselves united, in an almost arrogant manner, *for* certain things in poetry, and *against* others, and this seems to me stronger evidence than Cicero's.

When Catullus started writing in 69 or 68 B.C. he had three traditions to draw on: Roman epic and tragedy; Roman comedy and satire; and the Roman love epigram, which was an importation from Alexandrian Greek. This third element was comparatively new, with a history of not more than fifty years. The examples we have are elegant but brittle; slight in accomplishment and small in quantity. The weightier traditions of tragedy and epic were not without Greek influence; but beside them the love epigram is like an exotic that had not taken root. By setting out these trends, in this way, I do not wish to imply that they were of equal importance, either in themselves or to Catullus. They were not. The exact nature of his debt to each is a matter of dispute. In general terms, however, it is safe to say that he drew his ability to convey grandeur (the Aegeus passage in poem 64) from the language of epic and tragedy; that he guessed at the uses to which colloquialism and realism might be put from the comico-satiric tradition; and that it was in the last, the somewhat precious form of the love epigram, that he saw the opportunity for original development. But a poet's greatness rests largely on the extent to which he is able to effect a synthesis of preceding traditions while producing something that has not been achieved before. This provides the fourth element: the constant and individual interplay between the three traditions. Fused in the *œuvre*, it is what gives Catullus's poetry its immediacy and, as far as Latin literature is concerned, its originality. Before Catullus, colloquialism had been confined to comedy; the elevated manner to epic or tragedy. In his poetry, for the first time, grandeur is heightened by unexpected realism. Colloquial diminutives express tenderness, which rubs shoulders with an equally colloquial grossness. The subject matter of the Roman epigram is

broadened and shifted to the entirely new field of the personal lyric with a wide variety of metres, many of which are used for the first time. As for his own epigrams, he confined these, for the most part, to elegiacs and, in so doing, made the brittleness of the epigrammatic technique, once a limitation of the poetic sensibility, an end in itself, so that his most vitriolic fantasies become disembodied and intellectualised: imagery and metaphor are discarded and a startling directness of language takes their place. But the most important thing Catullus does for the Alexandrian Greek epigram is to make it personal.

The Greek stimulus sought by the 'new poets' came mainly from Alexandria. The reason for this was natural enough. Ever since its foundation by Alexander in 332 B.C., and the subsequent building of the great library by Ptolemy I (323–283), it had been the principal centre of Greek culture and learning. It represented what Greece meant to a contemporary. It would be unrealistic to expect writers to have gone behind Alexandria to Greece itself. Her judgements (in literary matters) were regarded as the judgements of Greece, or the Greek cities. Added to this, Alexandria had, in the second century B.C., come under Rome's sphere of influence, and as recently as the year 80 had actually been bequeathed to Rome by Ptolemy X in his will. The focal point for the scholars and poets of Alexandria was, of course, the magnificent library, the greatest in the world, carefully nursed, for their own political ends, by the Ptolemies. Callimachus himself, whom the 'new poets' seem to have held in especial regard, worked and taught there from c. 260 B.C. to his death in 250. Apollonius Rhodius (c. 295–c. 230), whose *Argonautica*, so sympathetic to modern tastes, was clearly known to Catullus, was a pupil of his. This was where the 'new poets' derived their ideal of the scholar-poet. It was here that they learnt to attach as much importance to the complexity of a poet's attitudes as to their consistency; it was here that they learnt their love of allusion and the oblique manner, and to cultivate an almost eighteenth-century type of artistic sensibility. It was here they learnt their respect for craftsmanship and their devotion to form and structure. But the 'new poets' applied these Alexandrian principles and techniques to a very un-Alexandrian situation. The Alexandrian school had been engaged in resuscitating, and to some degree had succeeded in embalming, an old tradition; the 'new poets' were endeavouring to found a new one. When considering the Alexandrian school as a whole, it is permissible to regret the lack of (apparent) spontaneity which characterised the earlier age of the Greek lyric. But spontaneity, or its appearance, is by no means the *sine qua non* of a successful poem. We regret its absence only in certain moods. To compare a poem of T. S. Eliot's to 'Go Lovely Rose' and find Eliot wanting, is to

indulge in an extra-literary judgement. Only a prejudice against Alexandrianism, as such, could lead us to deplore its deep and widespread influence over Catullus and his circle. They – or Catullus – had plenty of ‘spontaneity’, and if his more substantial works, such as poems 64 and 68, do at times read a little like *The Waste Land*, they seem none the worse for that.

The longer works (61–8) stand in the middle of the volume of his poems as it has come down to us, and deserve special mention. But first there is the volume itself, which is curiously arranged. It is in three parts: mixed lyrics, long poems and epigrams. The epigrams are nearly all quite short. Poem 76, the longest, runs to no more than twenty-six lines, and may more properly be called a love elegy. With 68, it represents the first example of its kind in Latin. This section is introduced, metrically, by the second half of the long poems, 65–8, which are all in elegiacs. The lyrics (1–60) are in various metres, sapphics, choliambics, iambic trimeters, and the metre which Catullus made peculiarly his own, the Phalaecian hendecasyllable, which appears to be calculatedly inserted between the others. Poem 34, the hymn to Diana, is the only one in this group to be written in glyconics, and, as with the elegiacs and poems 65–8, so here we find that the *first* of the long poems is also written in glyconics. It is clear that whoever arranged the poems did so on an almost exclusively metrical basis. This would suggest that the arrangement was at least post-Augustan. But the decisive factor is the length of the whole book – approximately 2,300 lines. This was enough to fill nearly three rolls; and the roll did not give place to our book form until the third or fourth century A.D. A likely theory is that poems 1–60 were originally a collection on their own, perhaps arranged by Catullus and preceded by the dedication to Cornelius Nepos. Various of the long poems, notably 64, would have been published as individual items, while the poems at the end may only have been passed round privately among intimates. There is no means of knowing whether they are complete, or whether they are a selection. While they contain some of Catullus’s best and most characteristic work, they are of varying worth, and are certainly more scrappily arranged than the lyrics.

Turning to the long poems, we see that 61 is in the form of a personal epithalamium. Its recipient was Lucius Manlius Torquatus, a close friend of Catullus; about the wife we know nothing. Poem 62 is another epithalamium, but generalised. Taken with poem 34, it is one of the only two non-personal or public poems that he ever wrote. It is written in hexameters. Poem 63 is the celebrated *Attis*. The subject is again the relationship between male and female, but it is treated psychologically, in terms of Catullus’s own experience, which he projects into the world of myth. It is written in the galliambic metre,

so-called from the priests of Cybele, the *galli*, from whose ritual cries and dance movements it was said to be derived. It is the only poem to have survived in this metre either in Latin or Greek. Poem 64 blends each of the foregoing elements: it is mythological; love is a public, official affair (the marriage of Peleus and Thetis), and a private one (Ariadne's elopement, desertion and consolation). Like 62 it is in hexameters; they are the only two poems he wrote in this metre, and it will be seen that they neatly sandwich the unique galliambics. Poem 65 introduces three new subjects: poetry itself, friendship and the loss of his brother. It is a dedicatory epistle to 66 and is addressed to Q. Hortensius Hortalus. It initiates the series written in elegiacs. Poem 66 itself is a direct translation from a poem of Callimachus', an elegant piece of court poetry verging on persiflage. Nothing – or little – is accidental in Catullus, least of all the subject matter of a translated poem. (Poem 51, his other direct translation, is further proof of this.) In No. 66 he chose a poem in which the protagonist – a woman's lock of hair – laments the fact that it was severed from its mistress's head on her wedding night, before she had had time to experience the pleasures of married love. The lock recounts the occasion and its circumstances, concluding with a request for votive offerings of the scents used by married women, \* since it never experienced these in life. If wives preface the 'chaste dalliance of the marriage bed' with libations such as these, they will be blest with arts which will keep their husbands faithful to them. I believe that Catullus has exaggerated the element of persiflage that he found in the original and used his subject matter as an opportunity to turn the poem he is translating inside out and thus make a personal poem out of a quasi official one. (Callimachus wrote the piece very soon after the events which it describes.) Poem 67, set in 'the province', consists of a dialogue between Catullus and the door of an unnamed woman. The Caecilius who is spoken of as having right of access to the house may be the fellow poet of No. 35, who had written a poem, presumably not unlike the *Peleus and Thetis*, on Cybele. Unfortunately, the local allusions are lost on us. We are confronted with (at the least) incest and adultery, and an attempt to swindle an inheritance out of someone under the Lex Voconia, whereby a daughter was unable to inherit a substantial sum unless she produced a male child, in which case she could hold the money in trust. (The same reference is found in Poem 68.) The poem is amusing, coarse, realistic, and presents us with the obverse of 61 and 62. Poem 68 is addressed to Manlius Torquatus. I accept the theory that Manlius's wife, Aurunculeia, has died, and that the poem is principally one of consolation. But Manilus's love and loss is intricately interwoven with Catullus's own loss (of his brother) and love (of Lesbia). The themes of friendship and



poetry make their reappearance. If 67 was local and realistic, 68 is local and romantic. Mythology is used again, but not now as a framework, as in 64. In 64 the mythological landscape was touched with realistic detail. Here, the world of reality is irradiated by myth. The poem has a trancelike quality.

Enough should have been said to show that this middle section contains poems that are essential to an understanding of Catullus, and that cannot be regarded separately from the rest of his work. If this seems a curious statement to the reader who has read my translations but is no Catullan scholar, then one of the purposes of my version will have been achieved. Not only do these poems form a unity in themselves but in their unreal and, in the *Attis*, violent and catastrophic, handling of the sexual relationship, they cast backwards to the extremes of tenderness, in the lyrics, and forwards to the obscenities of the Gellius sequence. (There are 'obscene' poems in section 1–60, and warm and tender poems in section 60–116; but as a generalization the distinction may be allowed to stand.) Catullus is, of course, a lyric poet. But, as far as the middle section is concerned 61 is nothing if not lyric; 65 and 68 both have very great lyrical beauty of a grave and meditative kind; while no man should imagine he can fully apprehend the spirit which informs the sparrow or the kissing poems, unless he has the *Attis* in his other hand. The objection to the longer poems would seem to resolve itself into an objection to 64. Since 64, together with 68, were doubtless the poems which he himself regarded most highly, another look at both of them would seem to be indicated.

Poem 64 is the centrepiece of the *Carmina*. It is a window on the world of the gods. If to-day we look back over our shoulders a thousand years or so we do not, even if we are G. K. Chesterton Distributists, feel that we have missed-out on Eden. But a similar idea does appear to have haunted both Greeks and Romans round about the beginning of the Christian era. It was no mere accident of literary fancy that insisted that all genealogies, whether of city, state or hero, should be traced back to the time when the gods still walked the earth. This feeling was the inspiration of the Evander passages in the *Aeneid*, of the whole of Ovid's sprawling *Metamorphoses* and, of course, of the *Peleus and Thetis*. Although the part played by Crete in the early history of the Aegean basin was then unknown, it is plain from both myth and legend that the Minoan age was in some obscure way recognised as the time when this desirable state obtained. In the *Peleus and Thetis* Catullus employs all the resources of a highly eclectic and allusive use of myth to depict its passing. In a sense, his method allows him to have things both ways. He can pin-point details which serve his purpose, but even while he is doing this the body of the

material he does *not* use still exerts its influence over the reader's mind. Taking the Argonautic expedition as a whole, the fact that Peleus leant over the side of the ship and saw and fell in love with the sea-nymph Thetis, is of such slight importance that it might well pass unmentioned; while Ariadne, deserted on Naxos, and Aegeus, committing suicide because of the wrong coloured sail, are traditionally, and rightly, regarded as postscripts to the Minotaur myth. Yet it is from the interlocking of details such as these, taken from quite separate mythological cycles, that Catullus conjures his orderly, consistent and convincing narrative. His points of departure are pre-Homeric Crete, the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, and Troy. The connection between them is effected (backwards to Crete) by the wedding quilt, and (forwards to Troy) by the ill-omened epithalamium. We are shown how the fall of Minoan Crete marked a process which, via the birth of Achilles, found its conclusion in the fall of Troy. As though this were not enough, Catullus also manages to tell us what the golden age once meant in terms of human happiness and what the future held in terms of human distress. He describes how a goddess marries a man, and a woman marries a god. A life of heroic action is rewarded in the first instance, and love is eased of its passion in the second. (Ariadne, as a victim of faithlessness and unrequited love, is a mouthpiece for Catullus's own feelings.) He also shows Nemesis overtaking evil (Aegeus's suicide), a foretaste of the state into which the world is about to lapse. The way in which the whole poem folds inwards on itself to the seventy lines of Ariadne's lament, which represents the 'personal' centre of the poem, is perhaps best shown in tabulated form.

II. 1–49: The Argonautic expedition on which Peleus first sees Thetis; the wedding day; the Palace; the coverlet on the marriage bed.

II. 50–264: Description of the scenes woven on the coverlet. This section is divisible as follows:

II. 50–75: Ariadne on the beach at Naxos; the intrusion of evil in the shape of human faithlessness;

II. 76–123: flashback of Theseus' expedition to Crete, the slaying of the Minotaur and Theseus' subsequent elopement with Ariadne;

II. 124–31: return to Ariadne on Naxos;

II. 132–201: Ariadne's lament and curse;

II. 202–14: the Gods, as Theseus nears Greece, hear Ariadne's

curse;

II. 215–37: flashback of Aegeus's instructions to Theseus before he set sail for Crete, and Aegeus's feelings on that occasion;

II. 238–48: return to the present; Theseus forgets his instructions; Aegeus commits suicide; Theseus' state of mind is compared to

II. 249–50: that of Ariadne as she stands gazing out to sea after him;

II. 251–64: the scene passes forward to the advent of Bacchus which ends the description of the coverlet.

II. 265–77: Departure of the mortal guests.

II. 278–304: Advent of the immortals – the Olympians, Jupiter and Juno, attended by the three demi-gods particularly associated with the bride and bridegroom. First: Chiron, the local deity of the chief mountain of Thessaly, Pelion, and the future tutor of Achilles; secondly, Peneus, spirit of the principal river and related to Thetis; and thirdly, Prometheus, who foreseeing the glory that will accrue from the marriage has persuaded Jupiter to sanction it. Apollo, who is to be the author of Achilles' death, is mentioned as staying behind on Olympus.

II. 305–22: Description of the Parcae.

II. 323–81: Hymn of the Parcae, constituting the epithalamium; the scene moves forward as the Fates foretell the birth of Achilles and the subsequent fall of Troy.

II. 382–408: Final peroration on the fallen state of man and the vanished golden age with which the poem has opened.

The total effect is cinematic. We have glimpses of paradisaal landscapes emerging from the clear, primal world of sea and sky. But the clarity is deceptive and the landscapes and figures dissolve into one another and are never fully revealed. All is a little mysterious; which is as it should be; for without mystery there is no paradise.

The second of Catullus's Alexandrian pieces (68) is even more complex. Unfortunately, the text is very corrupt. We do not even know for certain whether it is one poem or two. (In the original codex, now lost, there was no indication where one poem ended and another began, and the copyist, after a break in his work, was quite capable of

taking up his pen again at the wrong place.) It is unlikely that the string of queries which the poem prompts will ever be satisfactorily resolved. If it is one poem, is it addressed to 'Allius' or 'Mallius', and is this person identifiable with L. Manlius Torquatus of poem 61? Is the *domina* of the house which has been lent to Catullus for his meetings with Lesbia(?) its *châtelaine*, or Torquatus's mistress or both? And is his wife, Aurunculeia, dead? And is her death really the main subject of the poem or, more accurately, the core around which the poem is built? As elsewhere, I have taken different readings from different texts, and different suggestions from different scholars – usually I have found that it has been the more traditional interpretation that has attracted me – and having selected my material on the basis of what I found most stimulating poetically, I have then tried to rewrite the poem as I imagined Catullus might have written it had he been alive to-day and writing in English. As a poem is more than the sum of its constituent parts, a certain ruthlessness over details is often necessary. It is the whole poem which has to be captured and rewritten. One is, of course, grateful for whatever *donnés* fall into one's lap, *passim*. But the details of a poem are to be digested so that they become a part of the living grain of the new poem, not embalmed like flies in ointment. Since 68 is not a narrative poem, a table setting out the various strands of which it is composed will need to be a little more explanatory than was the case with 64.

II. 1–40: Preface. Manlius has written to Catullus asking him for 'gifts of Love and the Muses' to console him in his sorrow. Catullus replies by saying that his own sorrows match Manlius's, and that he cannot comfort him as he would wish. Manlius's sorrow consists of the loss of his young wife, Aurunculeia; Catullus's of the loss of his brother.

II. 41–73: Catullus nevertheless decides to record the debt that he owes to Manlius, who once provided him with a house in which he could meet Lesbia and in which they could make love. She comes to him as a 'bright-shining goddess'.

II. 74–86: His own love for Lesbia, and the dead Aurunculeia's for Manlius are fused in the image of Laodamia, the symbol of wifely passion. (See Glossary.)

II. 87–90: Troy, where Laodamia lost her husband, Protesilaus, is apostrophised in the first of two bridge passages as a source of widespread sorrow. (There may be a connection here with the 'historical' view of Troy expressed in 64, where its fall marks the end of the golden age.) Through Troy, Laodamia's loss is linked to Catullus's and so to Manlius's. In the intensity of her love she

represents Aurunculeia, and of her grief, Manlius.

II. 91–100: Catullus's brother was buried near Troy. The theme of his dead brother was broached in the first section of the poem; it is taken up again and expanded. Catullus repeats the original lines (20–4) nearly word for word.

II. 101–4: The second of the bridge passages about the Trojan War. It is worth noting that Helen is mentioned by name in the first, and Paris in the second. In themselves the two passages constitute a laconic reflection – from outside the body of the poem – on the inherently calamitous nature of mortal love.

II. 105–30: Catullus passes from the cause of Laodamia's grief to an analysis of her love. He does this by means of three sustained similes, each to do with a different sort of bird: the Stymphalian birds of Hercules's Sixth Labour, the vulture, and mating doves. The poetic significance of the passage has puzzled commentators. Catullus's technique is similar to that of our seventeenth-century Metaphysicals. In lines 74–86, Laodamia's love is evoked in such a way that we are intended to participate in it; here the intention is that we should understand it. The passages complement each other.

To take the similes in order: I read the caverns under Mount Cyllene as a reference to the consummation of the marriage. Hercules can stand only for Manlius. We cannot know what his Sixth Labour suggested to a man of Catullus's day: but there can be no doubt that in the context of the poem the derivation of the word 'Stymphalus' (Φαλλός and στύμα: the male and female members) is of peculiar significance. The reference to Hebe, goddess of eternal youth, whom Hercules marries on his apotheosis, indicates that Aurunculeia, still young, will be reunited with Manlius in the next world. In the second simile, the vulture symbolises death. The woman's gifts that the bride (Laodamia) brings will keep even death at bay. In the third simile, Isis's vulture gives place to Venus's doves which symbolise the enjoyment of sexual love. In brief, we have (a) ritualistic loss of virginity; (b) the expectations and the transforming power of love; (c) sexual pleasure.

II. 131–48: Reintroduction of the theme of Catullus and Lesbia's love for each other. Their illicit relationship is compared with that of married love.

II. 149–60: Epilogue. Catullus has, after all, written a poem to Manlius. Not a formal piece, such as he sent to Hortalus in 66, but

an account of their relations with each other. The poem ends with a final evocation of Lesbia as 'she who endows Catullus with the quality of vision'.

I have often felt that the poem reads like an expansion of 65. Both poems consist of a similar, elaborate interweaving of the themes on which Catullus felt most deeply. Both have the same slow-trailing movement of successive clauses loosely drawn out. But what made the poem new in Latin, and remains its outstanding virtue, is the calculated and delicate use of myth to delineate specific psychological states. It is a reminder of what we may well have lost in the works of Calvus, Cinna and the other 'new poets'.

There remains the *Attis*. Walter Savage Landor's comment with which he concludes his long survey of Doering's second edition of the *Carmina* (published nearly fifty years after his first, Leipzig, 1788) provides a fitting and amusing prelude to any discussion of the poem.

They who have listened, patiently and supinely, to the catarrhal songsters of goose-grazed commons, will be loth and ill-fitted to mount up with Catullus to the highest steeps in the forests of Ida, and will shudder at the music of the Corybantes in the temple of the Great Mother of the Gods.

The poem is a strange one, both violent and barbaric, full of odd coinings and archaisms, and written in the breakneck metre known as 'galliambic'. The youth Attis is described as crossing the sea to Asia Minor and there castrating himself in the frenzy of his devotion to the Mother Goddess. The act is accompanied in the original Latin by a change of gender. Attis calls to the other initiates of Cybele's cult to join him at her shrine on Mount Ida. There he falls into a coma. On waking, his immediate reaction is to regret what he has done. He returns to the beach and looks back over the sea. There follows a twenty-three-line lament for the civilised patrimony which he has abandoned. This patrimony is described in Greek terms, not Roman, a fact which has led some scholars to presume a Greek model, even a Greek original, and to read the whole as an expression of conflict between civilised and barbaric values. Even if such an interpretation is correct, it still leaves the core of the poem untouched. Following Attis's lament, Cybele unyokes one of her lions and instructs it to drive Attis back into the thickets on the slopes of Ida, where he is to remain for the rest of his life, a helpless devotee. In the last three lines, Catullus prays to Cybele to protect him from such desires; 'goad others to rabid madness; keep your fury from my house'. The lines are spoken as though he has woken from a nightmare (the preceding ninety lines) and recognised, with horror, himself in the figure of the

unfortunate Attis. To emphasise this reading I have placed the last four lines of my version in direct quotes.

When considering the significance of this poem, I have always found it suggestive that the Temple of Cybele stood not far from Clodia's house, on the Palatine. The clashing cymbals, the drums and the peculiar ululating cries of the worshippers must on occasion have been audible to the members of Metellus Celer's household. Whether the initial stimulus that Catullus found in the myth lay simply in an accident of locality such as this, or whether it was the result of his trip to Asia Minor, it is impossible to say. The worship of Cybele had been introduced into Rome in the year 204 B.C., during the Second Punic War. A black stone representing the Goddess had been brought up the Tiber and placed, temporarily, in the Temple of Victoria, since the new temple which was designed to house it had not yet been completed. The cult was of Anatolian origin and was ecstatic like that of Dionysus, some of the terms being interchangeable. The general effect of both has been described as not unlike a latter-day Dervish dance. The worshippers inflicted wounds on themselves, were liable to despatch anyone who stumbled on their devotions, and, in the rites of the Mother Goddess, actually underwent voluntary castration. The fundamentally grave Romans viewed the cult with suspicion, and it was not allowed to spread.

On many occasions, in moments of intense emotion, Catullus expresses his feelings in the guise of a woman. The fact that homosexuality was not then considered either as a vice, an aberration or a disease, as it is now, is attendant but not cardinal to the point that I wish to make, which is that there was in Catullus a strain of femininity which went deeper than 'normal' adherence to the bisexual conventions of his class and time. His Iuuentius poems strike exactly the same note as the heterosexual poems such as 32, that were not written to Clodia. The absence of 'guilt' is matched by a similar absence of 'spirituality' – of anything that is not a straightforward satisfaction of desire. With Clodia, lust is at a discount. It is she, to speak from the evidence of the poems, who displays the animality, not him. In No. 72 he even compares his feelings for her with those of a father for his daughter: an attitude unique in Roman poetry. Poem 51 is a translation from Sappho. It is the poem in which he gives Clodia the name of 'Lesbia'. In it, not only does he speak to her in the person of Sappho but the poem he has chosen to translate is one in which Sappho describes the physical sensations she experiences from the close presence of her beloved, in her case, if we accept the tradition, another woman. In the beautiful, tentacular 65, the startling, bright little vignette at the end (which is in itself a brilliant switch from the inclusive to the elliptical) represents an identification of himself with

a young girl who is caught harbouring a guilty secret, the secret being her awareness of her own sexuality, symbolised by an apple. In poem 2, he wishes he were able to play with Labia's sparrow, *as Lesbia does*, and imagines that if he were, he would feel like Atalanta, when she stooped to pick up the apple and so lost the foot-race and, with it, her virginity. In No. 66, we have observed how he assumes the *persona* of a woman's lock of hair; while in No. 68 we noted a similar switch of sexes in the passages where he describes Manlius's and his own grief in terms of Laodamia's. But there is an obverse to this side of Catullus's nature. It is to be found in his obsession with the more repulsive aspects of sexuality. (Poem 97 and the Gellius sequence.) His male drives found their outlet here, and the more disagreeable the news they could report, the more justification they provided for his invert fantasies. In poem 11 he refers to Lesbia as 'dragging the guts' out of him in the love act; and elsewhere there are references to the way in which a woman 'drains' a man of virility. It is as though Catullus felt that at the moment of orgasm a man became like Cybele's priests behind Metellus Celer's house. This I believe to have been the significance of the Attis myth for Catullus. Woman has, as it were, a lien on man's sex, an attitude expressed in the priests' castration and in the dramatic change of gender in the poem. It is the reason why Catullus was both repelled and attracted by the myth. The hate which Attis proclaims for Venus in line 17 is identical with that which Catullus in poem 85 expresses for Clodia. It has nothing to do with the antipathy of discordant elements, but arises from the repulsion from which attraction draws its strength, each succeeding the other in the love-hate see-saw. The experience is, of course, that of the manic depressive. And the *Attis*, as is now generally accepted, is a document of that state.

As a footnote to the poem, it is worth recalling the story of how an ancestress of Clodia's vindicated her chastity by using her *zona* or girdle, to secure the image of the Holy Mother when the ship bringing it up the Tiber ran aground in shoal water. It is unclear exactly how she did this, but the garment in question was evidently used to bring the image (it was probably a meteorite) safely to dry land. Clodia must have known the tradition. And Catullus too. Did he perceive and, if so, relish, the irony it contained for him?

As I have intimated above, I have followed no one text in my translation. The original codex, which according to a venerable tradition was discovered wedging a wine barrel in Verona, at the end of the thirteenth century A.D., was in a poor state. There were frequent *lacunae* in the text, attributable (according to the same tradition) to the operation of the wine on the parchment. Worse than this, the codex itself disappeared again as mysteriously as it had appeared,



although fortunately not before at least two copies had been taken. The efforts of scholars have since then been directed towards establishing the readings of this lost codex by collating the various copies – and copies of copies – which were taken from it. R. A. B. Mynors' recension is the most recent and among the most valuable contributions in this field. Unfortunately, as with C.J. Fordyce's volume, it appeared too late for me to make full use of it. Of the three almost certainly spurious poems, I have included No. 18, but followed Professor Mynors in omitting Nos. 19 and 20. Apart from this, I have taken 2b as part of 2 and have omitted 14b; I have taken 58b as part of 55; 78b as part of 78, and 95b as part of 95.

The hills around Lake Garda can have altered little since Catullus's day, and the waters of the lake not at all. Garda is subject to very swift changes of weather. The wind off the Dolomites blows down over Trento to Riva at the head of the lake. The hills which stand close in to the northern shore conduct the wind from one end of Garda to the other. Suddenly the water will be curled into steep, crested waves, so that the lake looks like the open sea. A very slight shift of wind and the waters will be smooth again. The pleasure boats which in the tourist season ply north and south between Riva, Malcesine and Desenzano wisely hug the coast. The violent and abrupt changes of mood which characterise the lake are also characteristic of Catullus's poetry. They are each as unpredictable as the other. But the lake could be called – is invariably and justly called – 'beautiful', and that is not the aptest word to apply to Catullus's poetry. There is immediacy and vitality and pathos and nobility. He riddles away with words, juggling them about, a dozen times in half as many lines: eyes, apples, stars, numbers and then more numbers. The primitive is sometimes surprisingly near the surface. He has made his own mirror, not of life but of himself, and in this of course he is a Romantic. The tributes to him in English poetry are innumerable. They start with Ben Jonson, and go through Lovelace to Landor and Tennyson, Swinburne, Arthur Symonds, Yeats and Ezra Pound. And when I think how I shall conclude this tribute of mine, I turn again to Walter Savage Landor whom I have just quoted and whose paraphrases and adaptations stand second only to those of Ben Jonson. The lines touch on the problem of Catullus's 'obscurity'. Landor, whom no one could accuse of laxity in this respect, saw that the question was of little or no importance in itself, and existed only in an incidental relationship to the whole work. The picture is a charming one, and not without relevance in these days of hasty and intemperate opinions on the subject of what should and should not be printed.

*About the bard of Sirmio –  
Yes, in Thalia's son  
Such stains there are – as when a Grace  
Sprinkles another's laughing face  
With nectar, and runs on.'*

St Briavels, Glos., 1944 –  
Tirolo di Merano, 1965

## THE POEMS

# 1

To whom should I present this  
little book so carefully polished  
but to you, Cornelius, who have always  
been so tolerant of my verses,

you

who of us all has dared  
to take the whole of human history  
as his field

– three doctoral and weighty volumes!

Accept my book, then, Cornelius  
for what it's worth,

and may the Muse herself  
turn as tolerant an eye upon these songs  
in days to come.

Lesbia's sparrow!

Lesbia's plaything!

in her lap or at her breast

when Catullus's desire

gleams

and fancies playing at something,

perhaps precious,

a little solace for satiety

when love has ebbed,

you are invited to nip her finger

you are coaxed into pecking sharply,

if I could play with you

her sparrow

lifting like that my sorrow

I should be eased

as the girl was of her virginity

when the miniature apple,

gold/undid

her girl's girdle

– too long tied.

Who loves beauty  
         veil her statues  
 veil Venus  
         her attendant Cupids  
 Lesbia's plaything  
         Lesbia's sparrow  
                 is dead  
 dearer to her than her two eyes  
 sweeter than honey  
         closer (even) than the young girl to her mother,  
 in her lap or at her breast  
 hopping from one shoulder to another  
 cheeping continually  
         to its mistress alone  
 ... has now hopped solitarily  
 down that dark alleyway of no return  
 evil shadows of the underworld  
         Orcus  
 who swallows up all beautiful things  
 needless act! a small bird!  
 to close in on Lesbia's sparrow,  
  
 and swelling my girl's veiled eyes  
         which redden with tears.

My bean-pod boat you see here  
     friends & guests  
 will tell you  
     if you ask her  
 that she's been  
     the fastest piece of timber  
 under oar or sail  
     afloat.  
 Call as witness  
     the rough Dalmatian coast  
 the little islands of the Cyclades  
 Colossan Rhodes  
     the savage Bosphorus  
 the unpredictable surface of the Pontic Sea  
 where  
     near Cytorus  
 before you were a yacht  
 you stood  
     part of some wooded slope  
 where the leaves speak continuously in sibilants together.  
 Pontic Amastris  
     Cytorus  
 – stifled with box-wood –  
     these things  
 my boat affirms  
     are common knowledge to you both.  
 More:  
     you witnessed the beginning  
     when she stood  
 straight on a hill-ridge behind the port,  
 in your waters  
     you saw the new oar-blades first flash,  
 thence through the impetuous seas

carrying her owner  
the call  
first to lee  
then to larboard  
sometimes the wind-god falling full on the blown sheet.  
Finally,  
no claim on the protection of any sea god  
on the long voyage up to this clear lake.

These things have all gone by.  
Drawn up here  
gathering quiet age  
she dedicates herself gratefully to you  
the heavenly twins  
Castor & Pollux  
the Dioscuri.



Lesbia  
    live with me  
& love me so  
we'll laugh at all  
die sour-faced strictures of the wise.  
This sun once set  
will rise again,  
when our sun sets  
follows night &  
an endless sleep.  
Kiss me now a  
thousand times &  
now a hundred  
more & then a  
hundred & a  
thousand more again  
till with so many  
hundred thousand  
kisses you & I  
shall both lose count  
nor any can  
from envy of  
so much of kissing  
put his finger  
on the number  
of sweet kisses  
you of me &  
I of you,  
darling, have had.

Your most recent acquisition, Flavius,  
must be as unattractive as

(doubtless) she is unacceptable  
or you would surely have told us about her.  
You are wrapped up with a whore to end all whores  
and ashamed to confess it.

You do not spend bachelor nights.  
Your divan, reeking of Syrian unguents,  
draped with bouquets & blossoms etc.

proclaims it,  
the pillows & bedclothes indented in several places,  
a ceaseless jolting & straining of the framework  
the shaky accompaniment to your sex parade.  
Without more discretion your silence is pointless.  
Attenuated thighs betray your preoccupation.  
Whoever, whatever she is, good or bad,  
tell us, my friend –  
Catullus will lift the two of you & your love-acts  
into the heavens  
in the happiest of his hendecasyllables.

Curious to learn  
how many kisses of your lips  
might satisfy  
my lust for you,  
Lesbia, know  
as many as  
are grains of sand  
between the oracle  
of sweltering Jove  
at Ammon &  
the tomb of old  
Battiades the First, in Libya  
where the silphium grows;  
alternatively,  
as many as  
the sky has stars  
at night shining  
in quiet upon the furtive loves  
of mortal men,  
as many kisses of your lips as these might slake  
your own obsessed  
Catullus, dear,  
so many that  
no prying eye  
can keep the count  
nor spiteful tongue fix  
their total in  
a fatal formula.

Break off  
     fallen Catullus  
         time to cut losses,  
 bright days shone once,  
     you followed a girl  
         here & there  
 loved as no other  
     perhaps  
         shall be loved,  
 then was the time  
     of love's *insouciance*,  
         your lust as her will  
 matching.  
     Bright days shone  
         on both of you.

Now,  
     a woman is unwilling.  
         Follow suit  
 weak as you are  
     no chasing of mirages  
         no fallen love,  
 a clean break  
     hard against the past.  
         Not again, Lesbia.

No more.  
     Catullus is clear.  
         He won't miss you.  
 He won't crave it.  
     It is cold.  
         But you will whine.

You are ruined.  
     What will your life be?  
         Who will 'visit' your room?  
 Who uncover that beauty?  
     Whom will you love?  
         Whose girl will you be?  
 Whom kiss?  
     Whose lips bite?  
         Enough. Break.

Catullus.  
     Against the past.



Veraniolus,  
first of friends,  
have you returned  
to your own roof  
your close brothers  
& your mother  
still alive? Indeed it's true you're back again &  
safe & sound  
among us all.  
So now I'll watch  
& listen to your anecdotes of Spanish men &  
Spanish places  
told as only  
you can tell them.  
I shall embrace  
your neck & kiss  
you on the mouth  
& on the eyes,  
Veraniolus...

Of all light-hearted  
men & women  
none is lighter-  
hearted than Catullus  
is to-day.

Alfenus Varus  
 buttonholes me  
 in the Forum  
 where I'm lounging,  
 drags me off to  
 view a girl who  
 seems at first a  
 not unladylike  
 young lady,  
 of obvious 'charms'.  
 The small talk turns  
 on how Bithynia  
 stands – my luck there.  
 I answer (which is  
 true) that neither  
 locals, praetors,  
 nor their aides  
 make money, that  
 palm-greasing's out,  
 that Memmius,  
 our praetor, greased  
 his aides elsewhere.  
 "But you," they said  
 "were not so poor  
 "you couldn't run  
 "to litter slaves –  
 "they come from there."  
 And I, because  
 of her, said lightly:  
 "Things were bad, but  
 "not as bad as  
 "that – I'd eight stout  
 "porters."  
 (I, who've  
 no one, here or  
 there, even to  
 lift the foot of  
 my split pallet.)  
 And the girl, in  
 character, at  
 once cooed: "Lend me  
 "your porters for

“an hour or two  
“this afternoon –  
“I feel like doing  
“what girls do,  
“at Serap’s shrine.”  
“My dear,” I said,  
“of course, but act –  
“ually they’re Gaius  
“Cinna’s – not my own  
“– he lets me use  
“them when I want.  
“It’s all the same....  
“You really mustn’t  
“take your friend’s friends  
“at their word;  
    young lady,  
“it’s common as  
“well as comic.”



Furius, Aurelius, friends of my youth,  
 whether I land up in the Far East,  
 where the long-drawn roll of the Indian Ocean  
     thumps on the beach,  
 or whether I find myself surrounded by Hyrcanians,  
 the supple Arabs, Sacians, Parthian bowmen,  
 or in the land where the seven-tongued Nile  
     colours the Middle Sea,  
 whether I scale the pinnacles of the Alps  
 viewing the monuments of Caesar triumphant,  
 the Rhine, the outlandish seas of  
     the ultimate Britons,  
 whatever Fate has in store for me,  
 equally ready for anything,  
 I send Lesbia this valediction,  
     succinctly discourteous:  
 live with your three hundred lovers,  
 open your legs to them all (simultaneously)  
 lovelessly dragging the guts out of each of them  
     each time you do it,  
 blind to the love that I had for you  
 once, and that you, tart, wantonly crushed  
 as the passing plough-blade slashes the flower  
     at the field's edge.

While everyone else is laughing & drinking  
 you extend

    a surreptitious claw,  
 Asinius,  
     towards the table napkins  
 of the negligent...

    an unattractive habit  
 you misguidedly think funny.  
 You demur?

    I assure you  
 it is at once squalid & unattractive.  
 Ask Pollionus, your brother  
 a boy crackling with wit  
 who would give a substantial sum  
 to disembarrass himself of your talents.  
 Expect, Asinius, a bombardo  
 of 300 hendecasyllables, or  
 return my napkin –

    of small value itself,  
 but a memory of friends,  
     Veranius & Fabullus,  
 who sent this set of fine table linen  
 from Spain,

    a present cherished by Catullus  
 as his own Veraniolus –  
 as Fabullus mine – must always be.

I shall expect  
 you in to dine  
 a few days hence  
 Fabullus mine,  
 and we'll eat well  
 enough, my friend,  
 if you provide  
 the food & wine  
 & the girl, too,  
 pretty & willing.  
 I, Catullus,  
 promise you  
 wine & wit &  
 all the laughter  
 of the table  
 should you provide  
 whatever food  
 or wine you're able.  
 For, charmed Fabullus,  
 your old friend's purse  
 is empty now  
 of all but cobwebs!

In return, the  
 distillation  
 of Love's essence  
 take from me, or  
 whatever's more  
 attractive or  
 seductive than  
 Love's essence. For  
 Venus & her  
 Cupids gave my  
 girl an unguent,  
 this I'll give to  
 you, Fabullus, and  
 when you've smelt it  
 all you'll want the  
 gods to do is  
*make you one*  
*gigantic nose*  
*to smell it, always, with.*



If, my irrepressible Calvus, I didn't  
 happen to love you more than my eyes  
 this hoax gift of yours would have made me  
 as cross as Vatinius....

*What* have I done to deserve  
 such (& so many) poets?

I am utterly demoralised.  
 May the gods scowl on whoever  
 sent you this clutch of offenders  
 in the first place.

– A grateful client?

I smell Sulla, the pedagogue.  
 A *recherché* & freshly culled volume,  
 such as this, could well come from his hands.  
 And that's as it should be – a meet &  
 acceptable sign that your efforts  
 (on his behalf) are not wasted.

But the collection itself is implacably bad.  
 And you, naturally, sent it along to Catullus  
 – your Saturnalian *bonne-bouche* –  
 so that Gaius, on this of all days,  
 might suffer the refinements of tedium.

No. Little Calvus. You won't run away  
 with this – for tomorrow, when the shops open,  
 I shall comb the bookstalls for Caesius, Aquinus,  
 Suffenus – all who excel in unpleasantness –  
 and compound your present with interest.  
 Until then, hence from my home, hence  
 by the ill-footed porter who brought you.  
 Parasites of our generation. Poets I blush for.

*My love & I* are yours to command

Aurelius –

with the following ‘modest’ reservation:

if ever at any time you’ve held

a chaste good in your mind,

unmarred by whatever desires,

modestly keep this boy of mine in like state.

I do not refer

to the menace of common contacts,

to those set on their business

coming & going in the streets,

it is you

& your punitive penis

I fear –

a threat to all sorts & conditions of youth.

Wag this maleficent instrument

where, when & as much as you may

on whatever occasions occur

outside your domestic circle,

only withhold one item from its attentions....

I present this modest request. But should

a congenital turpitude

take you & prick you into

besetting Catullus’s love with pitfalls of seduction

look for the luckless fate of the common adulterer:

he who

with ankles clamped

and door open

feels the horse-radish

(suitably cut for withdrawal)

splitting him,

or the mullet’s fins.



*Pedicabo et irrumabo*

Furius & Aurelius

    twin sodomites,

you have dared deduce *me* from my poems

which are lascivious

    which lack pudicity....

The devoted poet remains in his own fashion chaste

his poems not necessarily so:

    they may well be

lascivious

    lacking in pudicity

stimulants (indeed) to prurience

and not solely in boys

but those whose hirsute genitalia are not easily moved.

You read of those thousand kisses.

You deduced an effeminacy there.

You were wrong. Sodomites. Furius & Aurelius.

*Pedicabo et irrumabo vos.*



Cologna Veneta –  
     where the good folk  
 dancing & holding their games  
     at *festa* time  
 on the rickety bridge over the Gua  
 have fears of the crazy bridge-props  
 (cast-outs from the lumber yard)  
 slithering one day  
     (plop) in the river-mud  
 – a bargain!  
     A risible ruse on my behalf,  
 and a new little bridge  
     your own *ponte di Catullo*  
 where even the cavorting priests of Mars  
 can play leap-frog in safety...  
     Pray, pitch  
 headlong from your precarious perch  
 where the marish mud waits deepest  
     & blackest  
 & infinitely offensive  
     a Veronese acquaintance of mine.  
 The man is a boor. His reflexes less  
 than those of a snoozing baby  
 rocked in the crook of its daddy's arms.  
 His bride's in her first flowering...  
     a girl as capricious  
 as a pampered yearling,  
     one to be watched  
 as closely as the tenderest grape-cluster...  
 while he,  
     for less than a fig,  
 yields her her maidenhead games  
     wherever she wants them.  
 Nor has he 'risen to the occasion'.  
     Hamstrung  
 like a Ligurian alder  
     – the chopper's child –  
 in a ditch by the roadside,  
     he responds precisely as though  
 no woman were anywhere near him.  
 The fool  
     hears nothing

sees nothing  
    apparently knows nothing  
(of himself included).

    Head over heels  
from your little bridge  
    despatch him

unawares –

    his dolt-like lethargy  
traumatically stirred,  
    who knows?

the husband may slough

    his horrid stupor  
as the pack-mule casts  
    its iron-soled slipper  
in the obstinate mud.

I dedicate, I consecrate this grove to thee,  
Priapus, whose home & woodlands are at Lampsacus;  
there, among the coastal cities of the Hellespont,  
they chiefly worship thee:  
                  their shores are rich in oysters!

Impresario of neediness  
     to-day, to-morrow & of yesterday  
 Aurelius would openly stuff whom I love,  
 always with him  
     laughing with him  
 'attached' to his flanks,  
 putting various tricks there to the test  
 – but in vain:  
     schooled in your methods  
 I shall break you open (Aurelius) first...  
 As a concomitance to good-living  
     I acquiesce in your acts,  
 but when whom I love as honey,  
     tastes your hunger  
 your thirst –  
     preserve yourself. Desist.  
 You will attain your objective only  
 at the cost of being buggered by Catullus.

I must, Varus, tell you:  
     Suffenus, known to us both as  
 a man of elegance, wit  
     & sophistication  
 is also a poet  
     who turns out verse by the yard.  
 No palimpsest copies  
     but new books with new ivories  
 inscribed on Augustan Royal,  
     the lines lead-ruled,  
 red tabs & red wrappers,  
     the ends shaved with pumice.  
 But unwind the scroll  
     & Suffenus  
 the well-known diner-out  
     disappears.  
 A goatherd  
     a country bumpkin  
 looks at us –  
     strangely transmogrified.  
 What should one think?  
     The envy of wits  
 becomes  
     at the touch of the Muses  
 a bundle of gaucheries....  
     and he likes nothing better  
 fancies himself  
     in the role of a poet...  
 Yet who,  
     in his own way,  
 is not a Suffenus?  
     Each has his blind spot.  
 The moat & the beam.  
     As Aesop says,  
 the pack on our own back  
     that we don't see.

Friend Furius,  
     'who has no slaves & no money'...  
 no bluebottle in the larder  
     no spider  
 no bright hearth-fire,  
     but a parent  
 & stepmother  
     whose strong teeth  
 make short work  
     of whatever you give them:  
 old boots & nails.  
     Count yourself lucky –  
 your father, his lean spouse, yourself,  
     in excellent health.  
 No indigestion.  
     No fears of fire, flood & theft,  
 the usual bogies  
     of prosperous householders.  
 (Who *could* want to poison you?)  
     Your three bodies  
 like polished bone  
     wonderfully dehydrated  
 by cold, heat & hunger,  
     what more could you want?  
 Sweat, phlegm, saliva  
     all nasal discharge  
 is foreign to you.  
     You're as clean as whistles.  
 Even your arses, dry  
     as fine, operative salt-cellar –  
 working  
     maybe ten times a year,  
 the product  
     like pebbles  
 or dry broad-beans  
     easily friable  
 between the fingers  
     & leaving no shit-smutch.  
 These blessings are not  
     to be sneezed at.  
 You should count yourself lucky.  
     You should also forgo

your importunate pleas  
for a 'small loan':  
you've more than enough as it is  
– if you knew it.

Best sprig of the clan

Iuventius

to-day, to-morrow, & of yesterday  
rather you had bestowed the fortune  
of Midas than your affections  
on that man (Furius)

‘who has no slaves & no money’.

“But he is *acceptable*, surely?” you query.

– Indeed,

& this ‘acceptable’ man has no slaves, no money.  
Dispute or disparage the point as you will...

(the man still has no slaves,  
he still has no money).



From Thallus the pederast  
     of flesh flabbier  
 than rabbit fur  
     gooseskin  
         earlap  
 or the cobwebby penis of an elderly gentleman,  
 from Thallus the pederast  
     as rapacious as  
 a typhoon in winter –  
     its crop of gaping sailors,  
 I demand  
     my Spanish scarves  
         my scrolls from Bithynia  
 which you have abstracted  
     and of which you are making  
 ridiculous display  
     as of family heirlooms.  
 Release my belongings from your glutinous clutches  
 or those fleshy thighs  
     those slug fingers  
 may carry the acute inscriptions of the ‘cat’,  
 and you, afflicted by unwonted sensations,  
 find yourself tossed hideously about  
     – a cockle shell on winter sea.

Your cottage, Furius, sheltered  
from the dry Scirocco,  
from Zephyrus,  
from Apeliota,  
from the bitter North-East draughts  
is exposed to an *overdraft* of a different sort –  
£1,250:  
ghastly... ruinous.

Falernian,  
    poold Falernian!  
cup-boy drown the cups  
as custom of Postumia  
tighter than the bursting grape  
ordains  
    but keep the water-jug  
boon of the straight-faced  
    far hence  
no friend to wine –  
*the Bacchus here is neat.*

In Piso's suite  
 are empty pockets  
 empty trunks &  
 light equipage,  
 is that not so  
 Fabullus mine,  
 Veraniolus  
 best of friends?  
 Can you fill up  
 on his small beer?  
 can cash-books show  
 more gain than loss?  
 Or are you as  
 Catullus when,  
 a praetor's aide,  
 his cash-books showed  
 successive losses, never gain?  
 Yes, Memmius, once  
 you filled me truly  
 slowly – daily –  
 with the length  
 of your great beam  
 and supine I  
 received it duly.  
 From what I see  
 your case is now  
 as mine was then:  
 you're stuffed with no  
 less large a crumb  
 of patronage...  
 & Fabullus  
 maledictions  
 on you both from  
 every Roman  
 god & goddess  
 for discredit  
 brought by you  
 upon the wolf-cubs  
 & their brood.

What man could stomach the sight  
 that was not enthralled  
 by loot, lechery & the political game?

Intolerable Mamurra  
 squanders

what shaggy Gauls  
 what ultimate Britons  
 once possessed.

Noblest Pederast!

Your stomach remains unturned?...  
 You are enthralled by loot, lechery & the political game.

Overindulged & overweening  
 the man stalks from bed to bed  
 like a white Venus-dove  
 or a parody of Adonis.

Noblest Pederast!

Does your stomach remain unturned?...

You are enthralled  
 by loot, lechery & the political game.

Was this the reason for the British venture?

That a debauched instrument  
 (yours & your son-in-law's)  
 should gobble up all this money?

An unusual campaign...

an unusual general!

Your celebrated munificence

would appear to have been  
 'misplaced'. Has not enough coinage  
 dribbled through this man's fist?

First his inheritance,

second the Pontic loot,  
 third, your own war in Spain,  
 (the Tagus

where you washed for gold  
has a story of that),  
    & now Gaul,  
& now Britain,  
    shake in their shoes.  
Why keep him?  
    What is he good for –  
beyond treating the fattest endowment  
    as a comestible?  
Is this the reason  
    Rome's topmost tycoons,  
father-&-son-in-law,  
    have been playing billiards  
with our world?

Alfenus from Cremona

forsakes the friendship of friends  
friendless now

quick to forget  
constant only in duplicity.

Gods of the Hill-Heavens do not smile on such acts,  
a fact you ignore

abandoning Catullus  
fallen in sadness  
and ill.

What can men do?  
Where can a man hold fast?

You commanded love  
traded my affections  
yielding no love-requital.

Now all is retracted,  
words, deeds,  
dissolved under the clouds.

You choose an eraser  
but the gods will remember  
and Constancy also,  
one day bringing the bitter herb to your mind.

Apple of islands, Sirmio, & bright peninsulas, set  
 in our soft-flowing lakes or in the folds of ocean,  
 with what delight delivered, safe & sound,

from Thynia

from Bithynia

you flash incredibly upon the darling eye.

What happier thought

than to dissolve

the mind of cares

the limbs from sojourning,

and to accept the down of one's own bed

under one's own roof

– held so long at heart...

and that one moment paying for all the rest.

So, Sirmio, with a woman's loveliness, gladly

echoing Garda's rippling lake-laughter,

and, laughing there, Catullus' house

catching the brilliant echoes!



Call me to you  
at siesta  
we'll make love  
my gold & jewels  
my treasure trove  
my sweet Ipsíthilla,  
when you invite  
me lock no doors  
nor change your mind  
& step outside  
but stay at home  
& in your room  
prepare yourself  
to come nine times  
straight off together,  
in fact if you  
should want it now  
I'll come at once for lolling on  
the sofa here  
with jutting cock  
and stuffed with food  
I'm ripe for stuffing  
    you,  
my sweet Ipsfthilla.

Vibennius & son, renowned  
among bath-hut pilferers

*père*

an adept at 'massage'

*fils*

voracious if of hirsute buttocks

why not remove yourselves?

Those manual depredations

are common knowledge,

the allurements of those bum-cheeks

a drug on the market:

why not remove yourselves?

Moving in her radiant care  
chaste men and girls moving  
wholly in Diana's care

hymn her in this.

Latona's daughter, greatest  
of the Olympian race, dropped  
at birth beneath the olive trees

on Delian hills,

alive over mountain passes,  
over green glades and  
sequestered glens,

– in the talkative burn,

Juno Lucina in the groans

of parturition, Hecat, fearful at crossed ways, the nymph  
of false moonlight.

You whose menstrual course  
divides our year, stuff  
the farmer's harvest barn

with harvesting.

Sacred, by whatever name invoked  
in whatever phase you wear, turn  
upon our Roman brood, of old  
your shielding look.

Fetch, papyrus,  
     our soft-measured poet  
 our confrère Caecilius  
     down to Verona  
 fetch him down from the shores of Lake Como.  
 There are matters of moment a  
 mutual friend has to impart.  
 If you're wise you will swallow the miles  
 though a girl there calls back to you,  
 her blonde arms thrown round your neck  
 holding separation away...  
 who has been locked in desire  
 licked with the familiar flame  
 from the moment she first looked  
 at your new work – incomplete –  
 of the Great Mother  
     the destructive Queen.

You, madam,  
     a Sappho *de nos jours*  
 have Catullus's sympathy,  
 Caecilius has indeed sung his incomplete song  
 of Cybele  
     of her strong power over us all  
 with seduction.

Volusian sheets  
 shit-shotten Annals  
 discharge the pledge  
 that Lesbia makes  
 to Holy Venus  
 Holier Cupid:  
 – if I give  
 myself to her  
 alone, again,  
 discontinue  
 launching these  
 trucacious squibs,  
 on a pyre of  
 coffin chips she'll  
 burn the verses  
 of the meanest  
 Latin poet  
 read in Rome, a  
 votive blaze to  
 limping cuckolds...  
 Thus with her  
 cerulean smile  
 has Lesbia pledged  
 a heavenly troth  
 in *trivia*. Hear,  
 Maid of sea-foam  
 Queen of Ancon  
 leafed Idalia  
 Cyprian Golgos  
 Amathusia  
 reed-bound Cnidos  
 Epidamnus  
 cross-roads of the  
 Adriatic,  
 take that vow as  
 here fulfilled and  
 neither lacking  
 wit nor point  
 in the performance:  
*burn script, blaze paper*  
*into the fire you*  
*rigmarole verse,*

*uncouth, banal  
Volusian sheets,  
shit-shotten Chronicle.*

Nine posts, five doors, up the Clivus  
     Victoriae, stands an  
 unsavoury resort... unsavoury  
     habitués inside,  
 who think that only they have cocks,  
     that only they can ruffle  
 a pudendum, the rest of us  
     as apt as goats. I could  
 cheerfully bugger you all while  
     you wait, kicking your heels.  
 Your numbers, a hundred or so,  
     leave me undaunted. Think  
 of the man-power involved! And  
     think of me now, scribbling  
 each of your names in black letters  
     on the house-front. For she  
 whom once I loved as no other  
     girl has been loved lives here.  
 Who has fled from my touch & sight.  
     Whom I fought for & could  
 not keep.... A mixed bunch – successful,  
     respectable men swap  
 places with dregs from the backstreets.  
     She is open to all.  
 And one, who outdoes his home-grown  
     rabbits – Egnatius,  
 the Spaniard with the beard, known for  
     his wild dundrearies &  
 glistening teeth, assiduously  
     (with native urine) scrubbed.

Angst,  
    ennui & angst  
consume my days & weeks,  
and you have not written  
or done anything to soothe my illness.  
I am piqued.

    So much for our friendship.  
Ah! Cornificius,  
    a word from you would cure everything,  
though more full of tears  
    than a line from Simonides.



Because he has bright white teeth, Egnatius whips out a  
tooth-flash on all possible

(& impossible) occasions.

You're in court. Counsel for defence

concludes a moving peroration. (Grin.) At a funeral,  
on all sides heart-broken

mothers weep for only sons. (Grin.)

Where, when, whatever the  
place or time – grin. It could be a

sort of 'tic'. If so, it's

a very *vulgar* tic, Egnatius,

& one to be rid of.

A Roman, a Tiburtine or

Sabine, washes his teeth.

Well-fed Umbrians & overfed Etruscans wash theirs  
daily. The dark Lanuvians

(who don't need to), & we

Veronese, all wash our teeth....

*But we keep them tucked in.*

We spare ourselves the nadir of  
inanity – inane

laughter. You come from Spain. Spaniards

use their morning urine

for tooth-wash. To us that blinding

mouthful means one thing &

one only – the quantity of

urine you have swallowed.

Whatever could have possessed you  
to impale yourself on my iambs?  
What ill-disposed deity inveigled you  
Ravidus, into this one-sided contest?  
Was it a letch for celebrity,  
at no matter what cost?  
    – then you shall have it:  
“Ravidus, loving in the place Catullus loves,  
is lastingly nailed in this lampoon.”

Formianus's whore,  
                    long-nosed  
well-stuffed Ameana,  
claims that I owe her  
'a cool thousand' – for *services*!

Gather round, friends & relations  
call in the medical practitioners  
assemble your kinsfolk  
and place the girl under analysis.  
Why?

She is clearly the victim of hallucinations  
(an advanced case of psychosis).

From the quarters of the compass  
     gather round Catullus  
 indelicate syllables  
     as many as you are,  
 a slippery whore has caught  
     Catullus by the hairs.  
 She won't give me my pocket book back.  
 Come with Catullus  
     follow her along the sidewalk  
 accost her on her beat  
     insist she gives it back.  
 You ask, "Which one is yours?"  
     The one parading in front  
 like a stage tart  
     grinning like a French poodle.  
 Surround the little bitch  
     insist she gives it back:  
     "My pocket book unwholesome whore  
     unwholesome whore my pocket book."  
 She looks the other way.  
     "O tart of turpitude! O brothel lees!"  
 The brazen-faced bitch does not blush.  
 Approach again  
     repeat in even louder tones:  
     "My pocket book unwholesome whore  
     unwholesome whore my pocket book."  
 We make no visible impression.  
     The girl is totally unmoved.  
 Indelicate syllables  
     to get our pocket book  
 we must adopt a change of front  
     we must adopt new tactics  
 thus:  
     *"Intact young lady and of nubile rectitude  
     would you be so kind as  
     to give me back my pocket book?"*

O elegant whore!  
    with the remarkably long nose  
unshapely feet  
    lack lustre eyes  
fat fingers  
    wet mouth  
and language not of the choicest,  
you are I believe the mistress  
of the hell-rake Formianus.

And the Province calls you beautiful;  
they set you up beside my Lesbia.  
O generation witless and uncouth!

It depends who's talking if you're a 'Sabine'  
 or 'Tiburtine' grange: hurtful people lay odds  
 you're 'Sabine', to friends 'Tiburtine' – but one or  
 t'other, Catullus scuttles happily  
 to shake off a bronchial chill in your suburban  
 grove, stomach-earned from lunging after  
 grandiose food-dishes. Dinner with Sestius  
 has meant reading his appalling speeches (the  
 Antian case): cold, vapid, unpleasant – I  
 was at once affected, displayed signs of chill,  
 developed a phlegmatic wheeze and fled  
 to your safety, where with rest & nettle broth  
 a cure has been effected. Refreshed, my thanks  
 to you my grange, not rubbing in this *bêtise*.  
 Next time I finger that maleficent script  
 let Sestius himself be seized with 'flu & phlegm,  
 who invites Catullus solely to make him read  
 speeches so bad no one else will touch them.

Phyllis Corydon clutched to him  
 her head at rest beneath his chin.  
 He said, "If I don't love you more  
 than ever maid was loved before  
 I shall (if this the years not prove)  
 in Afric or the Indian grove  
 some green-eyed lion serve for food."

*Amor, to show that he was pleased,  
 approvingly (in silence) sneezed.*

Then Phyllis slightly raised her head  
 (her lips were full & wet & red)  
 to kiss the sweet eyes full of her:  
 "Corydon mine, with me prefer  
 always to serve unique Amor:  
 my softer flesh the fire licks  
 more greedily and deeper sticks."

*Amor, to show that he was pleased,  
 approvingly (in silence) sneezed.*

So loving & loved so, they rove  
 between twin auspices of Love.  
 Corydon sets in his eye-lust  
 Phyllis before all other dust;  
 Phyllis on Corydon expends  
 her nubile toys, Love's dividends.  
 Could Venus yield more love-delight  
 than here she grants in Love's requite?

Now spring bursts  
    with warm airs  
now the *furor* of March skies  
    retreats under Zephyrus...  
and Catullus will forsake  
    these Phrygian fields  
the sun-drenched farm-lands of Nicaea  
& make for the resorts of Asia Minor,  
    the famous cities.  
Now, the trepidation of departure  
    now lust of travel,  
feet impatiently urging him to be gone.  
Good friends, good-bye,  
    we, met in this distant place,  
far from our Italy  
    who by divergent paths  
must find our separate ways home.



Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus  
one circumcised Priapus of a proconsul  
apparently prefers the company  
    of a couple of society-mongers  
Porcius & Socraton  
    his own mangy hirelings  
to that of my dearest Veraniolus  
my own dear Fabullus,  
they dining well at the best places  
you forced to hang about the street-corners  
    angling for invitations.

Iuventius,  
were I allowed  
to kiss your eyes  
as sweet as honey  
on & on, three  
thousand kisses  
would not seem  
too much for me,  
as many as  
ripe harvest ears  
of sheaves of corn  
would still not be  
too much of kissing you, for me.

Silver-tongued among the sons of Rome  
the dead, the living & the yet unborn,  
Catullus, least of poets, sends  
Marcus Tullius his warmest thanks:

– as much the least of poets  
as he a prince of lawyers.

The other day we spent,  
Calvus, at a loose end  
flexing our poetics.  
Delectable twin poets,  
swapping verses, testing  
form & cadence, fishing  
for images in wine  
& wit. I left you late,  
came home still burning with  
your brilliance, your invention.  
Restless, I could not eat,  
nor think of sleep. Under  
my eyelids you appeared  
& talked. I twitched, feverishly,  
looked for morning... at last,  
debilitated, limbs  
awry across the bed  
I made this poem of  
my ardour & for our  
gaiety, Calvus... Don't  
look peremptory, or  
contemn my apple. Think.  
The Goddess is ill-bred  
exacts her hubris-meed:  
lure not her venom.

Godlike the man who  
sits at her side, who  
watches and catches  
    that laughter  
which (softly) tears me  
to tatters: nothing is  
left of me, each time  
    I see her,  
... tongue numbed; arms, legs  
melting, on fire; drum  
drumming in ears; headlights gone black.

*Coda*

Her ease is your sloth, Catullus  
you itch & roll in her ease:

former kings and cities  
lost in the valley of her arm.

Drop dead, Catullus, lie right down where you are & die.  
That blister Nonnius occupies a magistrate's chair;  
Vatinius commits perjury – & collects a consulate.  
Drop dead, Catullus, just drop right down (& die).

I laughed. Calvus. I laughed today  
when someone in the courtroom crowd, hearing  
your quite brilliant *exposé* of  
the Vatinian affair, lifted his hands up  
in proper amazement, and cried suddenly:  
“A cock that size... *and it spouts!*”  
I laughed. Calvus. I laughed.

If not by all that his friends boast,  
at least by pin-headed Otto's unattractive pate  
by loutish Erius's half-washed legs  
by Libo's smooth & judicious farts  
by Sufficio's old man's lust turned green  
may great Caesar be duly revolted. Once more  
my naïve iambs strike home...  
                    unique general!



Where  
     if it's not too much to ask  
 are you hiding,  
     Camerius?  
 I've searched for you in the circus  
 in the parks  
     among the bookstalls  
 even in Church (!)  
     I have accosted  
 on Pompey's Broadway  
     tart after tart,  
 meeting  
     as you would expect  
 with a succession of blank looks.  
 "Where's Camerius, you low-down whores?"  
 One opens her bodice,  
 "You could find him between these pink tits  
 if you looked."  
     A job,  
 I reflected, for Hercules.

Why, Camerius  
 why arrogate to yourself this scarcity value?...

If I were Europa's bronze jailer  
 doing my rounds in Crete,  
 if I were fleet Ladas  
     or feather-footed Perseus,  
 if I rode the sky like Pegasus  
 or with the dazzling swiftness of Rhesus' team,  
 – supposing I had the sandals of all the winds  
 I should still find myself sapped dry  
 eaten with fatigue  
     looking for you,  
 'friend'.

Come, Camerius, out with it  
 bare your precious secret to the day –  
 where are we likely to find you?  
 who are these girls  
     pliant as cream  
 who detain you?  
 Remember,

to keep the tongue locked in the mouth  
is to reject love's seasoning:  
love-talk enhances love-acts.

Alternatively,

if you want to,  
bolt up your mouth...

only  
divulge to Catullus the whereabouts of this *amour*,  
so we may share her.

A matter for mirth, Cato, & a smile  
worth your attention, you'll laugh  
you'll laugh as you love your Catullus, Cato  
listen – a matter for more than a smile!  
Just now I found a young boy  
    stuffing his girl,  
I rose, naturally, and  
    (with a nod to Venus)  
fell and transfixed him there  
with a good stiff prick,  
    like his own.

*Caesar Mamurraque!*

A peerless pair of brazen buggers,  
both tarred with the same brush  
this, from the city  
    that, from south Latium,  
the stain ingrained no purgative can flush...  
double dyed,  
    the 'heavenly twins',  
erudite in the skills of the one divan, each  
as voraciously adulterous as the other –  
joint competitors in the woman's market.  
A peerless pair of brazen buggers!

Lesbia, our Lesbia, the same old Lesbia,  
Caelius, she whom Catullus loved once  
more than himself and more than all his own,  
loiters at the cross-roads  
                    and in the backstreets  
ready to toss-off the 'magnanimous' sons of Rome.

Menenius' wife,  
    a red-headed cat from Bologna,  
cat-like licks-off Rufulus....  
You've seen her often  
    in the public cemeteries,  
scrounging for the food-offerings  
    placed by the half-burnt bodies,  
chasing the small loaves  
    as they roll out of the fire,  
and ducking a cuff  
    from the unshaved corpse-heaver.

Hard. Hard. As she-cat whelped in desert mountains.  
As Scylla's spawn spewed from the screaming vulvula.  
As inhuman, precisely, as inflexible.

So, the supplication that  
rises to you fresh as the new chance  
– is scorned. Hard. Hard.

Hill (breeder) of Helicon,  
     sun's seed of Urania,  
     magnet a man is  
 for a maiden,  
     Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
 Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Soft smell of marjoram  
     melt on your forehead,  
     cast the flame veil  
 come, joyfully:  
     upon a white foot  
         the saffron shoe.

Gaiety of daybreak!  
     ringing voices  
     shake out the bride-song!  
     dance-throb in the fields,  
 tossing the pine torch,  
     arms, waving.

Vinia comes to her altar,  
     stands to her Manlius,  
     shining as Venus to Paris,  
 rare fortune is born  
     of a rare girl,

fair as the flowering Hamadryads  
     or the myrtle they tend  
     as their toy,  
         the shaft  
 shining,  
     wet with their dew.

Come, Hymen! come from your hill slopes  
 come from Aonian cave



from the Thespian rock  
leave your cold nymph,  
                    Aganippe,  
    – leave her her waters,

come! bring the bride home  
    set her, passionate,  
    beneath her new yoke  
lock her up in her love  
    as the tree  
    fast in its ivy.

And you, girls innocent of men,  
    whose own bride-day comes  
    come! shake out the bride-song:

‘Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
    Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.’  
Happily cleaving the aether  
    the god’s presence  
        descending  
    Hymen will answer your calls:  
leading in Venus,  
    her bounties,  
    he couples true lovers.

Where else can the lover,  
    tortured, turn?  
    what greater god among men?  
Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
    Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Trembling, the father  
    hands you his daughter,  
    for you, she’ll unfasten  
    her girl’s girdle,  
for your step, the bridegroom  
    swollen with love, waits.  
You pluck the flower

    from the mother’s lap,  
    in the novice’s hand  
the spray blossoms,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

There are no love-games,  
    fairly played,  
        without you,  
    but with you  
Venus luxuriates,  
    where is your match among gods?

Absent, our homes  
    are empty of children,  
    parents barren of offspring,  
with you –  
    they proliferate!  
    what greater god among gods?

Destitute of your sanctities  
    the land is defenceless  
    with you  
she is inviolate,  
    where is your match among gods?

Fling the doors wide  
    she has come!  
    See  
        a shower  
of torch flakes....

...

...

    bashfully holds back,  
    and steps  
        hesitant  
towards the threshold  
    in tears –

no tears! Aurunculeia,  
    the bright day will not see  
    a more beautiful woman  
than you  
    spring from the sea:

a hyacinth of flowers,  
    apart in a great garden,  
    ‘a rich man’s flower’:  
you linger: the day fades,  
    shed your concealment!  
Shed your concealment!  
    a new bride  
    hear our bride-speech,  
see, the shower of torch flakes!  
    shed your concealment!

No fickle lusts,  
    no rooting between  
    other sheets –  
your husband will lie  
    only in the valley of your breasts,

a ‘hero’ caught in your arms  
    as the grape pole  
    caught in the twisting vine.  
See! the day fades:  
    shed your concealment!

O bed in which all....  
...  
...  
...  
    and at the white foot of the bed.

Venus will shine for him  
    in the vague night,  
    blaze  
        at mid-day.  
The day fades:  
    new bride, shed your concealment!

Toss the pine torches!  
    see, the flame  
    veil approaching,  
shake out the bride-song!

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Ribaldry of marriage  
and nuts  
nuts  
for the scrambling boys,  
friend!  
*that* sort of love is finished,

a cascade of nuts!  
listless you may be:  
you've played with nuts  
in your time  
now Talasius waits on your service,  
a cascade of nuts!

No servant girl to his taste  
or to yours  
until now  
(and the barber scrapes your first hairs)  
come,  
a cascade of nuts!

Does the 'well dressed groom'  
letch  
after former smooth cheeks?  
– *that* sort of love is over,  
Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.  
Yours were the licensed joys,  
but the licence  
expires  
with your marriage,  
Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

And Lavinia, let your man ride  
how he will – where he will,  
or you'll find him riding elsewhere,  
Hymenaeus Hymen Io!

Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

The *châtelaine*

of a fine house,  
dispenser of influence,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!

Io! Hymen Hymenaeus,

until, white with woman's age

the old head  
quivers all day

in endless assent,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Now, in the saffron shoe,

with fair omens,  
step over the threshold  
approach the porch doors,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!

Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Within, stretched on the Tyrian couch

your one man  
swelling with love

waits for you only,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

A withering flame

stirs in him  
as in you,  
but his the deeper,

less radiant, heat,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!  
Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Page, let go

the bride's arm  
let her come

to her bride-bed,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!

Io! Hymen Hymenaeus,

and you women,

practised in bride-bed  
and birth-bed

disarray her

bring her to Hymen,

Hymenaeus Hymen Io!

Io! Hymen Hymenaeus.

Now Manlius stands at the bed

where she waits  
shining

a lily among yellow field-flowers:

she lies,

white on the saffron sheets.

But Manlius has

his own love-gifts  
Venus has blessed him:

come, do not linger –

the day fades,

and he comes, straight to the bedhead,

with Venus inside him  
he takes his desire  
in full view:  
love knows no concealments.

Assessing their love is like counting

the stars in the sky  
or the sands

in the African desert:

theirs are a hundred love games.

Play out your love games

freely and swiftly  
plant the new shoot

an old name cannot lapse

you must make, in the one place,  
constant renewal.

May a diminutive Torquatus  
drop from Lavinia's womb  
waving pink arms  
with a smile (first)  
for his father,

whose stamp he must carry  
plain to the world,  
the bond  
of his mother's  
fidelity,

and Lavinia will rank  
with Penelope,  
chaste in the birth  
of Telemachus:  
archetype of wives.

Fold the doors softly,  
bridesmaids,  
feasting is over,  
let them ply arms and legs  
in their love-games,  
the constant renewal.

*Young Men*

Gather young men as the twilight gathers  
 Vesper gleams faintly in heaven  
 it is time to bestir  
     time to abandon the wedding tables  
 for the bride comes through the dusk  
     it is time for the bride-hymn.  
 Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

*Maidens*

Watch where the young men gather by the porch-doors  
 face them while Vesper hangs fire over Thessaly  
 they are gathering quickly  
     intent on their song  
 on contesting the bride-song with us  
     response versus response.  
 Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

*Young Men*

Here is no palm for the asking  
     observe these  
 young girls conferring together with girlish seriousness,  
 their care  
     a sole-minded intensity  
 must  
     produce the worth while,  
 while we  
     distracted  
 deserve our defeat  
     our minds on the one thing  
 with only an ear for the song:  
     success waits on devotion.  
 Come! bend minds to the business



girls flower in song  
man makes response.

Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

*Maidens*

What flame glows more pitilessly in heaven than yours

Vesper:

under your gaze

the daughter wrenched from her mother's clasp,

from the mother's clasp

twined there

torn apart

her maidenhead placed under a young man's burning hand:

what jackbooting of lost cities

pitiless as such an act?

Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

*Young Men*

What flame shines more resplendently in heaven than yours

Vesper:

under your sign the marriage bond is sealed

the young man's troth

the father's pledge

is effected

in your ardour the consummation is joined:

what hour from the gods

resplendent as such an hour?

Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

*Maidens*

Vesper has bereft us of one....

...

*Young Men*

With your rising

the night watchman guards against

furtive lovers on the prowl by night

whom you as Lucifer

may disconcertingly discover

still at their thefts

for maidens' acts belie their mock complaints,  
affecting aversion

for what they most desire.

Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

### *Maidens*

When withdrawn in some walled garden

a rose blooms

safe from the farm plough

from farm beasts

strong under sun

fresh in light free air

sprouting in rain showers

that rose is beauty's paragon for man or woman's pleasure,

but once the bud has blown

– when the thin stalk is left

no paragon remains for man or woman's pleasure:

so, intact

a girl stays treasured of her sex

but let her lose her maidenhead

her close petals once polluted

she cannot give the same delight again to men

no longer be the cynosure of virgins.

Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

### *Young Men*

When in an open field

unyoked a vine droops

no vine-limbs shake to the wind

no ripe grape-clusters sprout

there the soft plant stoops under its own weight

the vine-tips flop to their roots

that vine no hind nor husbandman will husband,

but yoke her to her elm-pole mate

and hinds & husbandmen in droves will husband her:

so, intact

a girl grows withered in her sex

but yoke her to her mate in her ripe season

she will yield her parents ease

she will yield delight to men.  
Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

*Young Men & Maidens*

Resign as your father resigns you to this man  
strength lies in surrender

father & mother in concert  
resign you,

incline to their will  
remember your  
own maidenhead is not truly your own  
one part to your father

one to your mother  
only a third to yourself  
incline then to their will & consign  
your share as they theirs

with the bride-gift,  
to this man  
in wedlock.

Hymen Hymenaeus attend O Hymen!

Plunging towards Phrygia over violent water  
 shot on the wood-slung Berecynthian coast  
 Attis with urgent feet treads the opaque ground  
 of the Goddess, his wits fuddled, stung with phrenetic  
 itch, slices his testicles off with a razor-  
 flint, sees the signs of new blood spotting  
 the earth, knows arms, legs, torse, sans  
 male members and

SHE

ecstatically snatches in delicate hands  
 the hand-drum of Cybebe, the hand-drum  
 of forest rites and Cybebe's torture  
 with nervous fingers taps the hollowed hide  
 shakes it and shaking summons the Mother's Brood:  
 "Ololugmos!

To Cybebe's thickets!

You have found the strange coast.

Ololugmos!

Stamp in my footprints!

You are tied to my tether.

Ololugmos!

Capsized in my currents –

unsexing yourselves

in my Love-hate.

Ololugmos! Break the close thicket,  
 with rabid abandon brighten Dindymia's face  
 stamp on Cybebe's ground

stamp where the drum shudders

stamp where the cymbals clang

where the flute drones

where the Maenads convulsively toss their ivied heads  
 where the protracted scream signals the Maenad rite –  
 the carlines flit restlessly in the grove  
 – Come with your quick triple step,

Ololugmos!"

As Attis speaks

the trembling tongues of her neophytes  
rise with the drum beats,  
the concave cymbals begin clanging.  
They head for green Ida.

Attis is a frenzied steer.

She gasps

goaded by yoke-hate  
bursts through the holy grove,  
the throbbing drums  
the foot-mad Gallae, stream in her wake....  
And the touch of Cybebe's bower brings lassitude.  
Fatigue lowers their lids. They are foodless.  
Investing apathy unstrings the manic pitch.  
They sleep.

Then when the sun's manifold hooves splinter  
darkness, and the eyes from the gold mask sweep sky &  
earth  
& the wild sea, Sleep takes a nimble dive from waking  
Attis into the expectant arms of his paramour

– Pasithea.

At once, shedding the night's tranquillity, Attis  
relives the pictures in her heart,

freed from the maelstrom,  
unclouded, recognises the rootless place where she has  
come,

her thoughts turned inside out, goes headlong back  
to the beach, where she cries to Attica she has lost  
for ever... looks over the brutal water  
that stares back at her through her tears:

"Attica mother & maker, I  
like a grateless housecarl fleeing  
his mesne, footloose among Ida's  
snows among the wood & rock lairs  
with the boar caves for an icy hearth,  
have I stripped myself of my patrimony  
friends, goods, kin?

Are these ungreek landscapes  
my new life-home?

Where is Attica?  
Where can the pupil open with Attica?  
The storm has lifted

and there is no *piazza*,  
where is the stadium? the wrestling ring? the gymnasium  
– a fallen life left to tread sorrow.  
What have I not known? What shape not been?  
A synthetic woman:

once man, once lad, once boy.  
Once the flower of the athletes.

Once the pride of the young wrestlers.  
My doors & thresholds were warm with friends.  
The house full of blossoms greeting  
the morning separation from the lover's couch.  
And now, I, but part 'I',  
a plucked torse

a Maenad

familiar of the gods  
huscarl of Cybebe,  
tethered under these obsessive peaks  
rooting with the tree-stag & the boar  
in the snow woods,  
the pain at Attis' heart outweighs the Attis rage."  
As the words fly from the pink mouth  
they lodge in Cybebe's ears  
who stoops to the fear-of-flocks  
unyokes the left-hand lion  
and whispers:

"Attis is truant. Hound Attis hither.  
Infect her with fear & desire  
for Cybebe's pale. Lash at yourself with  
your tail-knot. Drown the whole mountain  
with roaring. Let the red mane dreadfully  
cloud the brute neck."

She looses the leash.  
The beast self-scourges its flanks

bounds through the brushwood, bursts  
on the white-lined sands, appearing  
where delicate Attis still stands by the sea.  
The demented creature flees to Cybebe's wold  
her life-space doomed spent in Cybebe's thrall.  
"Great Cybebe, Mother Goddess, Berecynthian Queen,  
avert your fury from Catullus' house  
goad others to your actions,  
others trap in the snarl of frenzy."

In old days  
     driving through soft waters  
 to the River of Pheasants  
     to the end of the Euxine Lake  
 pines sprung from Pelion  
     carrying picked men  
 Argives each like a tree  
     hearts set on the Colchian pelt  
 of gold, daring to track  
     salt deserts in a fast ship  
 cutting blue waves with firwood blades  
 for whom the indweller of the arx  
     the queen of hill-castles  
 had made hull poop & sail  
     – volatile under light winds –  
 binding firmly the pine-plaits to the curved underprow  
 the first boat to experience innocent sea –  
 Amphitrite.

    As the moving waves took the keel  
 the water, chopped with oars, grew white  
 and from the runnels of foam faces peered  
 of Nereids, wondering. Then  
 and not since

    men with their own eyes  
 saw the bare bodies of nymphs  
     in broad daylight  
 caught in the marbled runnels of foam  
 as far down as the nipples....  
 So Peleus was stirred towards Thetis  
 so Thetis came to a woman's bridal  
 and Jove gave his blessing.

    O heroes  
 brides nymphs oreads



born in a golden time  
before the tribe of gods had gone from earth  
I call on you in my poem  
standing with Peleus  
Pillar of Thessaly  
blest beyond most in their bride-torches  
whom Jove himself  
author of gods and goddesses  
has given one of his girls,  
and Thetis  
prettiest of mermaids  
touched as her own,  
whom Tethys & old Ocean  
girdling all that we stand on –  
have yielded a granddaughter.

On the day  
the longed-for light leaps up  
Thessaly gathers in concourse  
gift-bearing guests  
a laughing crowd  
their hearts in their faces  
converge on the Palace.

Cieros is empty  
Phthiotic Tempe deserted  
the houses in Crannon  
Larissa's walls  
abandoned –  
flocking into Pharsalia  
packed under Pharsalian roofs  
the crowds gather.

No man tills the field  
the bullock's neck grows soft.

Not for many days shall the pronged hoe  
rake among the vine-roots,  
or the pruning hook lessen  
the olive tree's deep shade.

Oxen do not turn the lumps of loam,  
red rust flakes the neglected plough.

But in the royal halls  
    wherever you look  
as room unfolds into room  
    silver & gold gleam  
an effulgence of ivory,  
    carved thrones,  
glittering cups on the long tables  
the whole building thrums with the splendour of royal  
    goods,  
and there, in the middle,  
    inlaid with Indian tooth  
and quilted with arras,  
    the divan of the small goddess  
    the arras ochred with rock-lichen &  
    tinctured with stain of rose shell-fish.  
This quilt is pricked  
    with figures of gods & men  
sketches of antiquity in *petit point*!  
Here are the never-silent sands of Naxos  
here Theseus vanishes towards the north,  
a woman watches from the empty beach  
    unflagging grief in her heart,  
Ariadne doesn't yet believe, quite,  
    she is witnessing what her eyes see –  
she's only just woken from a trap  
(of sleep)  
    found herself alone on the island.  
And Theseus, heedless as storm & wind  
    carves up the waves as he goes  
and throws their love-words overboard.  
    But the Minoan girl  
with seaweed on her legs  
    goes on looking from the shallow water  
with tragic eyes  
    she goes on looking from a long way  
frozen in the statuary of grief,  
    like a Maenad,  
until waves of her own shake her

her hair shakes loose of her yellow snood  
her thin bodice flaps open at her breasts  
her breasts, the colour of milk,  
push through her torn brassière,  
snood skirt bra  
the shallows take her torn clothes  
swirling the silk in eddies at her ankles  
the clothes do not matter:

her body is lost in you  
Theseus –

Ariadne!  
Venus has kept for you her best thorn of love  
love-fated girl

love-fated from the hour Theseus  
steered from the curved breakwater of the Piraeus  
set course for the iron city of the iron king  
Minoan Knossos.

A blight lay over the narrow streets of Athens....  
The story goes that to absolve herself  
of the murder of the bull-king's son

Androgeos  
at the games at the Panathenaea

Athens yielded  
yearly ten of her best men  
yearly ten nubile girls (unmarried)

food for the bull-king  
until Prince Theseus one day  
proffered himself for his sweet city,  
“The shipments of the dead not dead  
from here to Crete shall stop”.

He sailed in a good ship, before fine winds,  
coming to the rock-hewn halls of Knossos.  
From her window

the royal girl looked down  
with a girl's lust,  
whom the women's quarters enfolded  
in her chaste bed  
as petals the scented stamen

who was like the myrtle buds on the banks of the Eurotas  
or the coloured breath of springtime  
not lifting her hot eyes  
till fire ran in her womb –  
the girl's body swathed in fire.

Remorseless Cupid

Holy Child

– who stirs hate & love in one cup!

Venus of Eryx

– a girl who will drown in your floods  
whispering at a blond stranger!

Venus of Golgos

– and expectations breaking in the heart!

Venus of leafy Idalia

– how often the girl's cheeks – fallow, like gold!

As Theseus walked out to meet the beast

poised between death and celebrity

Ariadne addressed herself to her prayers

with firm lips

making her small offerings to the gods,

who acted.

For as on the top of Mount Taurus

in Turkey

where the great oaks shake out their boughs

and the pine trees drip resin

a high wind contorting the trunk

can pluck out a tree by its roots

so that the monster upended

comes down beamwise

splintering what's in its path

so Theseus capsized the bull-monster

and the quelled body lay in a heap

its fruitless horns sticking up.

Then fingering the thread

he turned his feet back,

along the delusive maze

of palace corridors,

stepped out of the labyrinth

a hero, unharmed  
and made off with the girl  
– prizing sweet love & Theseus  
before the lot of them  
eluding her father's watch  
forgoing her three sisters' embraces  
her mother's,  
tearful for a lost daughter  
whom the wind blew to white-ringed Naxos  
whom sleep took in the night  
whom yesterday's bridegroom  
forsworn  
left, before morning.

And now scared at her own grief  
scattering her screams broadside  
she runs to the top of the cliffs  
looks at the waves rolling northwards  
then runs out into the sea  
holding her silk petticoat above her knees,  
glass-cheeked,  
at the end of tears,  
and frozen with tears,

the words well from the pit of her bride's stomach:

"Why did you lift me from Cretan bower  
"dumping me here on an empty beach,  
"shrugging off Heaven, her plans for us,  
"heedless of freighting home snapped pledges?  
"Nowhere the means to flex steel  
"no appeal that could touch you.  
"You did not tell me to look for seduction  
"but for bride-ale & wedding torches,  
"for the increments of Hymen,  
"– waste words shredded now on wind.  
"Now no woman listen to man's love-words  
"or look to find there his love-bond:  
"as long as they itch for it  
"they will say anything  
do anything,

“but with lust slaked

“the soft words are forgotten

“the promises null.

“I caught you from the back coil of your fate

“happy to exchange a half-brother for love’s need

“and you leave me – scavenge for island birds & beasts:

“no tumulus for me dead

“no death-dust as cover.

“You are flint

where the bitch-cat whelps under desert rock,

“or spume

when brine-water sickens with sea-spawn,

“you are the kindless issue of the twin gulfs

– storm-ridden Syrtes –

“of the octopus & the maelstrom,

epitomes of ruin.

“Is this your guerdon for a life saved?

“If you did not want to marry me

“because of your father (who is prejudiced)

“you could have taken me home with you

“and I should have tended you

“got your bath ready for you,

“washing your arms & feet with spring water,

“each day smoothing the coloured bedspread in your  
room.

“But why should I give my tears

“to this wind? In this state?

“Wind is deaf as well as dumb.

“And he’s wind-driven in the middle distance.

“There’s nothing here but rocks & seaweed.

“In the hubris of indifference Fate

“deprives me even of an ear to listen.

“If only the Athenian sloop

“had never entered the bay

“at Knossos, with its grim cargo

“for the bull, fixed hawsers to the quay,

“captained by an attractive sailor...

“with a soul like a trap-door

“whom we took in out of pity –  
his name was Theseus.

“Where can I go?  
What is left for me?

“Our Cretan hills?  
There’s bitter water between.

“A father?  
Whom I abandoned in blood guilt.

“Or the love-purpose of a husband?

“Who makes the rowlocks creak  
“in his hurry to get away from me.

“And inland on Naxos?  
Derelict

“no roof-tree  
no escape  
“the surcingle of sea-water  
“no hope  
no reason for refuge

“all is dumb  
all is alone  
all is nothing

“but these lids won’t grow grubby with death

“till from the gods I’ve wrung amercement –

“on Olympus someone tips back the scales.

“Listen:  
raveners of men’s evil  
Erinyes

“upon whose scalps  
as images of hate

“snakes feed,  
Tisiphone!  
Megaera!

“Alecto!  
these moans are forced

“from a feverish body,

“as blind as epilepsy,

“they are the truth of Ariadne’s heart.

“Don’t waste what galls,

“make Theseus deal

“as brutally as he dealt me  
“himself & someone loved.”

As the voice poured from the tragic mouth  
crying for revenge on the ill dealt her  
Jove’s brow bent in assent  
so that land and wild sea shook,  
the gleaming stars shivered in the sky  
and a mist fell on Theseus  
who at once forgot the strict words,  
till then locked in his heart,  
that he signal careworn Aegeus  
by hoisting the glad-omened sails  
when the home port hove in sight.  
For before Theseus slipped anchor  
dropping beneath the city’s ramparts  
his father had kissed him  
yielding his son to sea-winds  
with the words:

“Restored at the tail-end of my life  
“from Troezene, my only Theseus  
“dearer than years to your father  
“of whom Fate & your own zest  
“would rob him a second time,  
“even before his failing eyes  
“had gotten used to your face,  
“I despatch you without happiness  
“banning bravado of flags & auguries.  
“I make public grief  
“with dust & ash on my grey hair  
“and the dark canvas hung  
“from your voyaging mast:  
“Hibernian dyed purple  
“signal of foreboding.

But should Athene  
“shield of Athens & of Athenians  
“stoop to sprinkle your right hand  
“with the bull’s blood, enact closely  
“heart-kept, unflecked by time  
“this mandate:  
On sight of Attic hills  
“to strip ship of purple  
“& hoist white sails from the plaited cords  
“so Aegeus, at the first, may see  
“with carefree heart his son safe,



“Theseus bent homeward in bright-omened hour.”

But these words locked in intention  
drifted from Theseus' head  
as the wind imperceptibly lifts  
the snow-mist from the hill-tops.  
For Aegeus posted himself in the watch-tower,  
his eyes tear-gutted,  
he saw the dark shrouds  
he read the false news of death  
and the old king cast himself from the battlements,  
while the boy, fresh from the bull-killing  
'came home' – entered a stricken palace  
victim of deceit as grim  
as he off Naxos coast had sprung  
bewildered Ariadne –

... who still gazes where the hull has dwindled,  
who revolves in her bride's heart a maze of sorrow.

And elsewhere on the quilt  
flushed with desire for the Minoan bride  
Bacchus his crew  
of Satyrs & Silenes  
descend about the glittering god,  
from Ethiopia, from Ind, from Thrace  
with tossing heads  
with frenzied 'Evoes!'  
they are shaking the thyrsus  
shaking the vine leaves round it,  
they catch the torn bits of bullock  
the snake belt writhes at their hips  
and the secret *cartouche*  
hiding the sacred objects  
objects no common sight profanes  
passes to the hand-slap drum beat,  
bagpipe, horn & cymbals  
sprinkle the hillside with discordant music.

Such the stitches worked in the wedding quilt,  
such the splendid figures embracing the divan.  
The young guests from Thessaly  
their eyes filled with the tapestry  
gradually ebb

from courts & corridors,  
the demi-gods are due:

it is a dawn figure,  
Aurora climbs  
to the threshold of the day-sojourning sun,  
Zephyr

flicks the flat water into ridges  
with a morning puff,  
the sloped waves  
loiter musically,  
later the wind rises  
& they rise,  
they multiply,  
they shed the sun's sea purple as they flee.

In this way  
the crowd scatters from the royal crannies,  
the mortal guests disperse to their own homes.

And now, Chiron,  
first to arrive,  
carrying from Mount Pelion  
green gifts  
of Thessalian buds  
from fields & alps  
from river banks  
where the light west wind  
has unsealed them.

It is the centaur's *potpourri*.  
They luxuriate  
through the wedding rooms  
with a confused fragrance.

And behind Chiron,  
Peneus

bearded with rushes  
from Tempe  
whose girdling woods  
are a river roof.

He brings  
store of beech  
dripping roots,  
& laurel  
like a girl's flanks,  
he brings the plane tree  
that is restless,  
the piercing cypress  
& the poplar  
supple in the wind,  
its tears of amber  
for flame-shrouded Phaeton.

The river god  
heaps the foliage  
outside & in  
until the house  
is dressed  
for a bride's bower-bed.

Next, Prometheus  
patron of crafts  
& seer  
still showing  
the faint cicatrices  
Jove's penance  
paid on the cliff-face  
in Caucasus,  
rock-chained  
arms & legs  
thirty years....

And then follows Jove,  
Juno,.  
their issue –  
only Apollo  
the archer

& his twin sister, Artemis,  
have spurned  
the bride-ale & wedding torches  
and are left to haunt Heaven.

The gods have disposed  
their white forms  
at the wedding tables.

It is bride-hymn time.

The Parcae prepare  
to intone  
the prophetic song.

The white shift  
wrapping their palsy  
is alive,  
it is red-hemmed  
at the ankles,  
and their white hair  
is bound  
with a red cloth.

Their deft fingers  
manipulate  
the eternal thread,  
one hand on the distaff  
the other carding  
with upturned fingers  
the spindle wool,  
drawing the thread  
downwards,  
twirling the whorl  
as the thread lengthens,  
and stooping  
with mauve lips  
to bite the rough ends off  
so that the bits hang  
from the withered skin.  
An osier basket bulges  
with new-shorn fleece...

the wool whirrs  
and the clear voices ring  
in Epithalamion  
for Thetis,  
her bride-doom  
time-sealed.

“Emathian bulwark, son of Jove,  
whose acts augment his born worth,  
accept the sisters’ wedding truth.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

Fair-fortuned star that draws the bride  
to groom, that yields the longed-for wife  
whose mastery of love will drown  
his heart, who settling to the drawn–  
out marriage sleep will make her arms  
light cushions for his heavy neck.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

Not yet such love as Peleus  
for Thetis holds (& she for him)  
has been – or such a grove of love.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

A child, Achilles, void of fear:  
foe known face-on not fleeing, first  
in racing, in hunt fleeter than  
the fleet-foot stag, whose hooves strike flame.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

No warrior dare confront Achilles  
where the Trojan rivers stream with  
Trojan blood, and the Greeks raze stone  
from stone of Troy, ten years consumed.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

The women at the gravesides weep  
his deeds, their hair is loose, coated  
with ash-dust, their ageing bosoms  
showing fist marks of their sorrow.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

As the farmer's scythe in close-packed  
cornstalks, stripping the yellow field,  
his fierce blade crops Troy's men-at-arms.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

Scamander by quick Hellespont  
will watch his valour swell, its width  
shrink with slaughter-stooks, while its deep  
course warms with the issuing blood.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

And Polyxena, death-given,  
too shall watch... and watch the earth-tomb  
rise, where her maiden limbs will fall.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

Once Chance lets slip the Greeks inside

the sea-born belt of stone, the young  
girl's blood will soak the barrow mound,  
who crouches to the two-edged sword  
& pitches, a headless trunk, forward.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

But now the joining of their loves,  
as Peleus accepts his nymph, &  
Thetis lightly yields to wedlock.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.*

And dawn light finds the nurse who tries  
today's neck fillet, her mother reads  
the sign & smiles: the goddess was  
not coy in love – young fruit will follow.

*Inexorably, fate follows thread,  
from spindle to the shuttle running.”*

This song  
                    of happy wedding-fates  
the Parcae sang  
                    to Peleus  
in old days.  
                    For once  
when piety had place on earth  
                    the gods themselves  
stood at our chaste doors  
                    or drank at the bride-ales  
of mortal heroes.

                    On Holy Feasts  
Jove from his bright throne  
saw the earth littered with a hundred bulls.  
The wine-god on Parnassus  
                    goading his dishevelled troop

was hailed  
with altar smoke  
from happy Delphos  
where the rasping Thyiades  
had emptied street & square.

Athene, Mars or Artemis  
appeared  
in the death-tussle  
and lit men's hearts.

To-day ill wreaking rules.  
Man's piety is fled.

*The loveless child neglects its parent's death  
a brother's blood trickles from brothers' hands  
the first son's girl attracts the father's lust  
who seeks a step-dame & a son's demise  
unwittingly the youngster mounts his mother  
her vicious incest spurning the house-kin  
spirits: laws bouleversé, and the welter  
such, those of Hill-Heaven have withdrawn their care.*

No longer do they deign  
to keep our bride-ales, or  
reveal themselves to us  
in the light of common day.



Although entangled in prolonged grief  
severed from the company of the Muses  
and far from Pieria

my brain children still-born  
myself among Stygian eddies  
the eddies plucking at the pallid foot  
of a brother

who lies under Dardanian soil  
stretched by the coastland

whom none may now hear  
none touch

shuttered from sight  
whom I treasured more than this life  
and shall –

in elegies of loss  
plaintive as Procne crying under the shadow of the  
cypress  
for lost Itylus,

I send, Hortalus, mixed with misery  
Berenice's Lock –

clipped from Callimachus  
for you might think my promise  
had slipped like vague wind through my head  
or was like the apple

unavowed  
the girl takes from her lover  
thrusts into her soft bodice  
and forgets there...

till her mother takes her off guard –  
she is startled,

the love-fruit trundles ponderously across the floor  
and the girl, blushing, stoops gingerly  
to pick it up.



Who scans the bright machinery of the skies  
 & plots the hours of star-set & star-rise,  
 this or that planet as it earthward dips,  
 the coursing brightness of the sun's eclipse,  
 who knows the dreams that fill Endymion's head  
 & draw sly Cynthia to his Latmian bed –  
 palace astronomer, whose gaze is set  
 more earnestly on Heaven than on *Debrett*,  
 by you this soft effulgence first was seen  
 who knew at once the ringlets of the Queen,  
 those ringlets Berenice with bridal care  
 pledged when the King left for the Syrian war  
 (the suppliant Queen with tender arms outspread  
 the King still swollen from the marriage bed),  
 who carries with him marks of sweeter strife,  
 the night's clear traces of a virgin wife!

Are brides averse to Venus (as they show)  
 or are their tears transparencies of woe  
 brilliantly shed amidst the wedding scene  
 effective bar to *you know what I mean?*

Their tears are false. I saw a bride's tears shed  
 when wartime took her husband from her bed.

Still wedded to the Queen's resplendent hair  
 I witnessed Berenice's crude despair.

And does she wail a so-called 'brother' gone,  
 or that she lies in bed at night alone,  
 her body wasted with intensive fire,  
 her soul devoid of all save one desire?

The proof is here, for virgin she displayed  
 a spirit commoner in man than maid.

When her betrothed preferred her mother's charms  
 she saw him slain, couched in Apáme's arms,  
 procuring by such resolute despatch

her present Kingdom (with a King to match).  
Then why this gale of wife-forsaken sighs,  
the trembling tears brushed from the brimming eyes?  
What God is this, unless the God of Love,  
who cannot brook his servants' long remove?  
For Ptolemy, all Egypt's altars smoke  
and hecatombs of bullocks loose their yoke,  
while I, a ransom from a loving head,  
secure a husband's swift return to bed,  
who conquers Syria, the Euphrates crosses,  
views India & returns with trifling losses.  
Whisked hence by Venus, lo! these few hairs set  
in starry payment of the royal debt.

And yet with grief, O Queen, I left your hair,  
a grief attested by your own coiffure,  
by which I vow (& none vows there in vain)  
no hair exists that scissors can't obtain.  
Scissors & hair? Before the touch of steel  
the tallest mountains have been known to reel.  
Athos itself, the Guardian of the Coast,  
bent to the pickaxe of the Persian host,  
whereat the Thian forbears of your crown  
watched a fleet passing & a mountain drown.  
For women's locks what help, when such as these  
yield to the metal of the Chalybes?  
A plague on smithies, be they crude or fine,  
cursed be the smelter, cursed the teeming mine!

My loss was freshly mourned, when Venus sent  
black Memnon's brother with Divine intent.  
The winged familiar mounts; he fans the air;  
he bears me upwards through the darkening sphere  
until in Heaven he lays me safe at rest  
in the chaste dove-cote of Cytherea's breast.  
Translated thus, at Queen Arsínoe's word,  
I join (though wet with tears) the golden horde.  
No more shall Ariadne's Crown alone  
gleam from the threshold of the Heavenly Throne:  
these holy spoils (with hers) must share from now

th' immortal honours of a mortal brow.  
The older stars make room. The Gods declare  
th' apotheosis of a lock of hair.

Shielding the Virgin from the Lion's wrath,  
(below the Bear that glisters in the North)  
trampled by night upon the Milky Way  
to kindly Tethys then restored by day,  
westward I wheel, leading slow Boötes on  
loth to sink seawards e'er the night has gone.  
Unlooked-for Fate! 'Tis ill to tempt the Maid –  
more abject still to leave the Truth unsaid,  
or, fearful of a God's offended smart,  
forbear to lend expression to the heart.  
Know: less a source of gladness than of sighs  
my elevation to the brilliant skies,  
my heavenly lustres shine (to me) less clear  
than those that hung from Berenice's ear,  
who used to smooth me with sweet oils & scent  
though not with myrrh, nor married ornament.

Pour then for me, upon your bridal night,  
before you doff your silks & quench the light,  
before your eager bosom you yield up,  
the mingled fragrance of the onyx cup,  
onyx, whose contents have so often led  
to the chaste dalliance of the marriage bed.  
Let the false tokens of unwedded lust  
degraded sink into the wasteful dust.  
Favoured the bride whose offerings I accept,  
her husband constant, she in love adept.

When, Berenice, you come to Venus' rites  
amid the cerem'ny of palace lights,  
when gazing upwards (in the cause of Love),  
you fix your eyes upon the stars above,  
recall the 'simple' scents I knew in life  
& pour the perfumes proper to a wife.

Let but Aquarius with Orion shine,  
the stars fall inward and this Lock Divine

be placed once more on that fair head of thine!

*Catullus*

Sweet entrance to a husband's pleasure  
     door Jove cram with goodness!  
 pleasant too for grandpapa's lust  
     door that worked well for Balbus  
 while the old man was alive  
     then switched fealty to madam  
 shutting yourself on the *ci-devant*  
     face: decay possessed the old  
 one: they laid him out stiff & bare.  
 Whence this *volte-face* from husband to young wife?

*Door*

This, Gaius, a whitewashed door,  
     is currently fee-held  
 of Caecilius. Envious  
     onlookers indeed would  
 make me their whipping post & say,  
 "Door you are the port-hole to filthy vice".

*Catullus*

Your words are unconvincing: deeds  
     bring words to sight & touch.

*Door*

How show this? Who cares?

*Catullus*

Catullus.  
 Unlock yourself to him.

*Door*

Then listen. The virgin lifted  
     across this threshold was  
 bogus, the groom not the first to  
     finger her, and his short

sword hung like a strip of limp beet  
    between his legs, never  
cocked navelwards. And worse. Grandpa  
    defiled his own son's sheets  
polluting the fallen house, either  
    from his own incest-blaze  
or from his son's nerveless testicles.

    A steadier hand was needed  
satisfactorily to unfasten...  
to undo properly, her suspender belt.

*Catullus*

Egregious parent to ejaculate  
in his son's private vulvula!

*Door*

There is more out of Brescia,  
    overhung by Cycnean  
cliffs, inthreaded by the honey-  
    watered Mella, mother  
of your loved Verona: there is  
    gossip of an affair –  
Postumius & Cornelius &  
    her ill-sex with the two.

*Catullus*

There are people to question a  
    door's knowledge of such things:  
one who cannot leave the house to  
    eavesdrop in the market  
or step far from this lintel, swinging  
    in & out all day.

*Door*

I have often caught her whispers  
    with her maids rehearsing  
their love-parties. I am sans ears  
    sans tongue. They laugh. The same



names crop up, & a long red man's,  
    whose name I bar from respect  
of a disapproving eyebrow:  
    there was trouble there when  
he claimed cash from the family in  
    respect of a reputed  
impregnation of the daughter's lying belly.

Borne down by bitter misfortune  
 you send me this letter, Manlius,  
 blotted with tears,  
         it comes like flotsam  
 from a spumy sea –  
         from the shipwreck of your affairs –  
 a cry from the undertow...  
 and that you,  
         whom Venus deprives  
 of soft sleep,  
         whom the Greek Muse  
 no longer tempts,  
         who turn restlessly  
 in an empty bed,  
         call me ‘my friend’,  
 that you look to Catullus  
         for love-gifts of Venus  
 & of the Holy Muses,  
         is a gift in itself,  
 but your own tears blind you to mine.  
 I am not neglectful of friendship,  
 but we two squat in the same coracle,  
 we are both swamped by the same stormy waters,  
 I have not the gifts of a happy man....  
 Often enough,  
         when a man’s toga first sat on my shoulders  
 I chased love & the Muses,  
         in the onset of youth  
 the tart mixture of Venus  
         seeming sweet,  
 but a brother’s death  
         drove a young man’s kickshaws  
 into limbo –

I have lost you, my brother  
and your death has ended  
the spring season  
of my happiness,  
our house is buried with you  
& buried the laughter that you taught me.  
There are no thoughts of love nor of poems  
in my head  
since you died.

Hence, Manlius  
the reproach in your Roman letter  
leaves me unmoved:  
“Why loiter in Verona,  
Catullus, where  
for men of our circle  
cold limbs in an empty bed  
are the rule –  
not the exception?”

Forgive me, my friend  
but the dalliance of love  
that you look for  
has been soured by mourning.

As for a poem...  
our tastes call for my Greek books,  
and those are at home  
where we both live  
and where our years pile up,  
in Rome...

I have few copies of anything by me.  
One case only has followed me North.  
There is nothing curmudgeonly here –  
on whom do you think

I would sooner lavish  
love-gifts of Venus  
& gifts of the Holy Muses  
than you?

You have turned to a friend  
& the friend's hands are empty....

How can I give what I have not got?

\* \* \* \* \*

And yet

lest 'Oblivion's veil'

descend

too early on your kindness

it is right

that the Nine Sisters

should know of my debt,

Manlius,

they will repeat

the words in this scroll

to unborn generations,

your name will grow brighter

as the paper yellows,

while the subtle spider

fails to hang

his delicate filaments

over a neglected name.

My harrowing

at the hands of Venus

(whom no man should ever trust)

is well-known

in Pieria –

how I burned like Aetnaean lava,

how I boiled like the hot springs at Thermopylae,

tears ceaselessly in my stricken eyes,

my cheeks drenched with lamentable showers,

and then. Manlius,

as a hill stream

unexpectedly springing

from a wind-clear crest

exchanging

the mossed boulders

of its source

for the steep-sloped gully

where it plunges  
precipitously  
to the valley floor  
you appeared  
& brought  
(with your friend's kindness)  
the refreshment to me  
that the stream brings to the fissured vineyards  
heavy under the hot sun  
& to the sweat-worn *contadini*  
who work in them.  
You came  
as the Dioscouri  
in the black-breathed storm  
conjuring the right wind from the right quarter,  
as Castor at the sailors' prayer,  
as Pollux at the sailors' prayer.  
You opened a path  
where the field had been shut before.  
You gave a roof to our love,  
whose Mistress connived  
at our *rencontres*  
& the love-ease that we sought there.  
With supple steps  
Catullus's bright-shining Goddess  
found her way thither,  
her woman's sandals  
echoing  
on the worn threshold-stone.  
Thus...  
with as flagrant desire  
Laodamia  
came to Protesilaus  
crossing the marriage threshold  
of a house doomed to stand empty,  
the blood-tribute neglected...  
the Lords of Hill-Heaven unappeased.  
Shield me,

Rhamnusia Queen  
from like joy-hastes  
by-passing Heaven  
Laodamia  
learnt too well  
in her swift widowing  
the thirst  
of holy altars  
for their blood-due:  
before the first & second winters  
with their lovers' nights  
had satisfied  
her bride's love-greed  
& made the shattered wedding-yoke  
endurable,  
her arms unclasped  
her husband's neck  
who sailed for Trojan walls  
and fell  
as Fate foresaw  
the first to land.  
For Helen's rape  
had driven Greece to arms,  
Troy was the cause,  
& Troy spread death –  
a common grave for the young of Asia & Achaia.  
The crowds of fighting-men  
& the feats-of-arms  
found their end there,  
and you, who shone in my life,  
who are stretched now by the same headland...  
I have lost you, my brother,  
your death has ended  
the spring season  
of my happiness,  
our house is buried with you,  
& buried the laughter that you taught me.  
You lie under alien ground

among anonymous tombs  
far from our reach  
far from our house-dan grave mounds:  
the malign fields of the Troad cover your ashes.  
There gathered  
the Argive Princes  
hurriedly leaving  
home, fields & hearth  
lest in an easeful bed  
Paris  
unchallenged, enjoy  
the limbs of the Spartan woman  
whom he had stolen.

This was the history  
of your loss  
Laodamia  
who were the loveliest of the brides of Thessaly,  
whose husband was sweeter to you  
than your own life  
whom you loved as completely  
as the water the whirlpool,  
the love-pit in your soul  
– deep as Lake Zerithon,  
where Hercules hacked out the caverns under Cyllene  
& drained the Stymphalian swamp of its silt waters,  
when the first & the least born,  
Eurystheus,  
set him to slaughter  
the man-eating cranes  
which Jove's son picked-off  
with his death-bolts,  
& was half-way to Heaven....  
A new god  
to come & go on Olympus –  
where Hebe,  
the cup-bearer,  
already half-fears

for her virgin days.

Far deeper  
than such gulfs of love  
was yours, that taught  
an untamed girl  
to wear  
with freedom the wedlock yoke....

Love  
was not more of a miracle  
for the old man with money  
& an only daughter  
who, at the last minute,  
produces a grandson...

the family wealth  
is secured,

the child's name  
inserted & witnessed in the will,  
while the vulturine relatives  
observed to have been perched  
expectantly

on grandpapa's grey poll  
flap off

discomfited.

No dove

uxoriously  
enjoyed its snow-white mate  
with more promiscuous beak  
than you

collecting bites for kisses,  
though doves

(they say)

are more omnivorous  
than women  
when their appetites are stung.

Yet these

beside your violence  
fail,

confronted by a fair-haired man,



Protesilaus....

And the light of Catullus's own life  
when she looked for his embrace  
gave little

in the matter of passion  
to you, Laodamia.

Cupid was clothed in saffron  
& shone & played  
in her love-movements...

who looks (it is true)  
elsewhere  
for other love.

But the quests are few & secret.  
I hold my tongue, remembering  
that cuckolds are a tedious lot –  
Juno herself

faced with all-loving Jove's  
interminable *amours*  
digests her rage....

Yet men & gods make poor comparisons.  
Why, like a husband, should I ape the father?  
No father yielded me this daughter,  
Who comes to my house  
by night

shedding Assyrian perfumes  
her husband unaware  
of the love-charms that she brings me....

I ask for no more,  
enough that her sweet thefts  
mark white days in the calendar of my love.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus, Manlius,  
for the 'offices of friendship'  
you have shown me,  
this gift of a poem –  
not perhaps what you asked for

but what I can do...  
it will help  
to ward off the rust of successive years  
from your name,  
& the gods will also reward you  
& Themis  
who ever in the old days  
kept an eye on the worthy.  
May happiness clothe you  
& the woman who comforts you –  
even the house of our love-games  
& its Mistress,  
& he who first brought us together  
the fount of so much that was good in our lives.  
But beyond these  
always she  
who is dearer to me than all else,  
my light & my eyes  
who, living,  
invests life for Catullus  
with its sweet reason.

Do not wonder when the wench declines  
your thigh her thigh to place beneath.  
You cannot buy them with the costliest clothes  
or with extravagance of clearest stones.  
There's an ugly rumour abroad,  
    b.o. under the armpits –  
and nobody likes that!

    So do not wonder if  
a nice girl declines the goat-pit.  
Either reach for the deodorant,  
or cease to wonder that she so declines.

Lesbia says she'd rather marry me  
than anyone,

          though Jupiter himself came asking  
or so she says,

          but what a woman tells her lover in desire  
should be written out on air & running water.

If ever anyone  
was deservedly plagued by a goat under his armpits  
or crippled with gout,  
    your rival  
who performs gratuitously on the body of your love  
would appear remarkably handicapped by both complaints.  
Whenever they do it, you're avenged on the pair of them:  
she passes out at once under the malodour,  
he's bent double in an ecstasy of gout.

There was a time, Lesbia, when  
you confessed only to Catullus in love:  
you would set me above Jupiter himself.  
I loved you then

not as men love their women  
but as a father his children – his family.

To-day I know you too well

and desire burns deeper in me  
and you are more coarse

more frivolous in my thought.

“How,” you may ask, “can this be?”

Such actions as yours excite

increased violence of love,  
Lesbia, but with friendless intention.

Canceled, Catullus, the expectancies of friendship  
cancel the kindnesses deemed to accrue there:  
kindness is barren, friendship breeds nothing,  
only the weight of past deeds growing oppressive  
as Catullus has discovered, bitter & troubled,  
in one he had once accounted a unique friend.

Gellius,

hearing his uncle anathematise the mere mention  
as well as the performance of love and love's ways  
determined to take full advantage of the situation  
by promptly assaulting his aunt. Uncle  
was discreetly unable even to refer to the event.  
Gellius could do as he wished.

If he buggered the old man himself,  
Uncle would not utter a word.



Reason blinded by sin, Lesbia,  
a mind drowned in its own devotion:  
come clothed in your excellences –  
I cannot think tenderly of you,  
sink to what acts you dare –  
I can never cut this love.

If evocations of past kindness shed  
ease in the mind of one of rectitude,  
of bond inviolate, who never in abuse of God  
led men intentionally to harm,  
such, as life lasts, must in Catullus shed  
effect of joy from disregarded love.  
For what by man can well in act or word  
be done to others has by me been done  
sunk in the credit of an unregarding heart.  
Why protract this pain? why not resist  
yourself in mind; from this point inclining  
yourself back, breaking this fallen love  
counter to what the gods desire of men?  
Hard suddenly to lose love of long use,  
hard precondition of your sanity  
regained. Possible or not, this last  
conquest is for you to make, Catullus.  
May the pitying gods who bring  
help to the needy at the point of death  
look towards me and, if my life were clean,  
tear this malign pest out from my body  
where, a paralysis, it creeps from limb to limb  
driving all former laughter from the heart.  
I do not now expect – or want – my love returned,  
nor cry to the moon for Lesbia to be chaste:  
only that the gods cure me of this disease  
and, as I once was whole, make me now whole again.

Whom I have trusted to no end (Rufus)  
other than expense of evil knowledge  
has come to the ambush,  
    inflamed viscera,  
raped all that was precious.  
Here was poison in rape of life  
    here was disease of love.  
Witness the chaste mouth of a chaste woman  
soiled by loathsome saliva –  
    not with impunity:  
your acts shall to succeeding ages  
be by the bent Sibyl broadcast, in accents of infamy.

Gallus's brothers possess  
one, the most attractive of wives  
the other, an equally attractive son.

Gallus is a 'dear'

arranging soft love for the lovers  
putting the beautiful boy & the beautiful wife into bed  
together.

Gallus is myopic:

himself a husband –  
giving a young lad lessons in cuckoldry!

They nickname Lesbia's brother 'pulcher',  
    naturally  
since she prefers him to Catullus & the Catulli;  
but let him dispose as he will of Catullus  
    (& the Catulli)  
when he finds three men of distinction  
    willing to greet him in public.

How is it, Gellius,  
    when you leave home in the morning  
& again at 2 in the afternoon  
    with the rest of the day before you  
after your soft siesta  
    that your lips  
previously pink  
    are unaccountably whiter than winter snow?  
One is not sure,  
    unless rumour speak true:  
that you swallow the taut tumescence of a man's stomach.  
One thing is certain  
    that Virro's strained thighs  
& your lips flecked with semen  
    cry out in unison to onlookers.

Surely, Iuventius, one of this throng in Rome  
must be more to your taste than your present guest  
whose skin is the colour of old ivory  
who comes from Pesaro  
    a provincial backwater,  
whom you've placed now in your heart,  
whom you dare hold up to Catullus,  
unaware of your solecism?

My eyes in your pledge, Quintius,  
and something more precious than eyes to me;  
do not touch what is more precious than my eyes,  
more treasured than something more precious than precious eyes.



Lesbia is extraordinarily vindictive  
about me in front of her husband  
who is thereby moved to fatuous laughter –  
a man mulishly insensitive, failing to grasp  
that a mindless silence (about me) spells safety  
while to spit out my name in curses, baring  
her white teeth, means she remembers me, and  
what is more pungent still, is scratching the wound  
ripening herself while she talks.

‘Hadvantageous’ breathes Arrius heavily  
when he means ‘advantageous’,  
intending ‘artificial’ he labours ‘hartificial’,  
convinced he is speaking impeccably while  
he blows his ‘h’s about most ‘hartificially’.  
One understands that his mother – his uncle –  
his family, in fact, on the distaff side  
spoke so.

Fortunately he was posted to Syria  
and our ears grew accustomed to normal speech again,  
unapprehensive for a while of such words  
until suddenly the grotesque news reaches us  
that the Ionian Sea has become  
                since the advent of Arrius  
no longer Ionian  
                but (inevitably) *Hionian*.

I hate and I love. And if you ask me how,  
I do not know: I only feel it, and I'm torn in two.

We have heard of Quintia's beauty. To me she is tall,  
slender  
and of a white 'beauty'. Such things I freely admit;  
but such things do not constitute beauty.

In her there is nothing of Venus,  
not a pinch of love spice in her long body.  
While Lesbia, Lesbia is loveliness indeed.

Herself of particular beauty  
has she not plundered womanhead of all its graces,  
flaunting them as her adornment?

No woman loved, in truth, Lesbia  
as you by me;  
no love-faith found so true  
as mine in you.

What, Gellius, of the man  
who itches with sister & mother  
    naked in night-vigils,  
who 'lies-in' for his uncle,  
what stain does he lay on himself?  
Such, that not Tethys to far limits  
nor Ocean, father of Nereids, can cleanse:  
no fouler brand (Gellius)  
    even supposing  
one were to lower his head to his own loins  
    and swallow himself.

Gellius is thin.

So?

He possesses  
an unusually agreeable mother  
a similarly compliant uncle  
a sister swelling with Venus  
and a whole crowd of female 'connections'.  
– Is he likely to put on much weight?

A taste for his sort of forbidden fruit  
is no way to wax plump.

Let there stem (Gellius)  
from the execrable conjunction of a son with his mother  
a Magus skilled in Persian priestcraft, for such  
if the unnatural cults of the Near East are correct  
must the seed be (Gellius) of mother & son:  
such only can summon the gods in song  
when the grease of entrail-fat flares on the altar.



In this hopeless & wasting love of mine  
I trusted you for one reason, Gellius:  
not because I knew you well  
    nor respected your constancy  
nor thought you able (or willing) to rinse out your mind  
but merely because the woman for whom  
this compulsive desire is eating me  
happens to be neither your mother  
    nor sister  
nor any other close female relative.  
In spite of our intimacy I did not believe  
you would find here incentive for action.  
– You did,  
    in the overwhelming attraction  
pure sin holds for you, Gellius,  
    or anything smacking of sin.

Lesbia loads me night & day with her curses,

‘Catullus’ always on her lips,

yet I know that she loves me.

How? I equally spend myself day & night

in assiduous execration

– knowing too well my hopeless love.

Utter indifference to your welfare, Caesar,  
is matched only by ignorance of who you are.

Stuffing, O'Toole naturally stuffs with his tool:  
the stew-pot stews in its own mess.

Nine harvests & nine winters since its inception  
 Cinna's *Zmyrna* is complete.

Hortalus turns out 5,000 versicles yearly.

Penetrating to the runnelled waves of Satrachus  
 the remote regions of its setting,

Cinna's *Zmyrna*

shall be read by white-haired generations.

The *Annals* of Volusius will wilt by the banks of the Padua,  
 occasionally a limp wrapping for mackerel.

Cinna's lapidary relics are to Catullus' taste:

let the public plump for the fustian of Antimachus.

If, Calvus, effects of grief  
    affect  
those enigmatic sepulchres  
    of former love  
& spent friendships,  
    lamented & evoked in our desire,  
reflect, her early death  
    will never grieve Quintilia  
half so much  
    as your long love must make her gay.

As God is my witness where is the difference between  
the smell of Aemilius' mouth & that of his arse?  
The cleanness of one equals the filth of the other. Actually  
his arse is probably the cleaner & nicer of the two:  
there he's without teeth, while the teeth in his mouth  
are half a yard long, stuck in the gums like an old wagon  
behind them the cleft cunt of a she-mule pissing in summer.  
And this Being copulates.

A fit dolt for the treadmill.  
Considers himself an object of elegance.  
Whatever woman handles this man is equally  
capable of licking the arse-hole of a leprous hangman.

The same can be said of you, Victius  
as of any open-mouthed bore

suffering from halitosis.

With that tongue of yours one can actually credit  
your licking, at will, besmeared boots & buttocks.

If you wish to prostrate the company –

gape:

you will effectively accomplish your purpose



Purloining while you played in honeyed youth  
 a kiss, sweeter than one suspects ambrosia tastes,  
 I paid, Iuventius, in full:

an hour or more

you racked me with my own self-exculpations  
 your loathing left untouched by tears.

No sooner had I kissed you

than with every finger

in every corner of your mouth

you washed & rubbed

all contact of my lips

like the slaver of some syphilitic whore  
 away. More:

you gave me, fallen, to an enemy

– Amor

who has not since ceased to rack me in his own usage,  
 so that a purloined kiss

once ambrosial

is changed to one more acid than acid hellbane tastes.

Met with such strong despite of love

my fallen love

shall from this day no kisses more purloin.

Undone or done up with love  
Caelius for Aufilenus  
    Quintius for Aufilena  
that for the brother  
    this for the sister  
each the flower of young Verona,  
something beyond 'brotherly love'...  
which should I favour, Caelius, but you  
who showed me such friendship when  
the irrational flame seared me  
in Rome? Be happy, Caelius. Thrive.  
    Be potent in loving.

Journeying over many seas & through many countries  
I come dear brother to this pitiful leave-taking  
the last gestures by your graveside  
the futility of words over your quiet ashes.  
Life cleft us from each other  
pointlessly depriving brother of brother.  
Accept then, in our parents' custom  
these offerings, this leave-taking  
echoing for ever, brother, through a brother's tears.  
– 'Hail & Farewell'.

If, Cornelius, we entrust our secrets  
only to those whom we know we can trust,  
here is Catullus,  
    devoted to secrets & secrecy  
a finger ever to his lips,  
    as mute as Harpocrates!

Either give me my hundred pounds back, Silo  
and persist in your boorish, surly behaviour, or  
if as a guide to tarts the money tempts you,  
simply give up your boorish, surly behaviour.

Do you really believe I could blacken my life,  
the woman dearer to me than my two eyes?

If I could

I should not be sunk in this way in my love for her –

who performs a zoo of two-backed beasts,  
daily with Tappo.

O'Toole

attempting an entry of the *mons Parnassus*  
is pitchforked by the Muses out of their (very) private  
regions.

When an auctioneer's seen with a good-looking boy  
(by himself)

it is fair to presume that there has been purchase & sale  
– in a closed market.



If ever anyone anywhere, Lesbia, is looking  
    for what he knows will not happen  
and then unexpectedly it happens –  
    the soul is astonished,  
as we are now in each other,  
    an event dearer than gold,  
for you have restored yourself, Lesbia, desired  
restored yourself, longed for, unlooked for,  
    brought yourself back  
to me. White day in the calendar!  
    Who happier than I?  
What more can life offer  
than the longed for unlooked for event when it happens?

If, by general consent, it should be decided  
Cominius, to cut short your reverend age  
fouled by obscene habits,

    I envisage your tongue  
inimical to the good  
        extracted & cast to the crows,  
your gouged eyeballs  
        gulped down the black gullet of a raven,  
entrails offal for dogs,  
        your limbs to the wolves.

Joy of my life! you tell me this –  
that nothing can possibly break this love of ours for each other.

God let her mean what she says,  
                    from a candid heart,  
that our two lives may be linked in their length  
day to day,  
                    each to each,  
in a bond of sacred fidelity.

Men always praise an honest whore, keen  
for the price of what she proposes to do,  
but to promise & break promise

    frequently taking & never giving  
proves the woman, Aufilena, inimical to men.  
Keep either your words or your modesty intact:  
perform what you offer,

    or don't make the offer at all.

To take fraudulent payment proves you  
worse than the tart who avariciously  
prostitutes herself with every part of her body.

In constancy content with one man, there  
Aufilena, is the epitome of bridehood; yet  
sooner your thigh put to promiscuous use  
than that the one man be your uncle  
and you begetting from him your own first cousins.

Naso! an elevated personage  
with a stoop, however, bespeaking  
a somewhat different sort of 'elevation'.  
Indeed, an elevated person.

In The Year of Pompey's First Consulate, Cinna,  
two men 'frequented' the First Lady,

In The Year of Pompey's Second Consulate  
the same two are still at it,  
but now with a cohort of others:  
adultery spreads like a weed.

O'Toole is generally accounted  
a wealthy man,  
    fish fowl game  
meadow & plough land,  
    the broad acres near Firmum  
packed with abundance.  
    To what purpose?  
Its owner spends more than he makes.  
I salute such riches  
    more apparent than real,  
I praise the estate  
    whose owner is lacking in substance.



O'Toole is the proud master of  
20 acres of pasture

    & 27 acres of arable land the rest is unfortunately swamp.

Where is our latter-day Croesus  
the man loaded with such an estate,  
grass plough wood moor & marsh land  
stretching away to the Hyperborean North  
and down to the shores of the Adriatic?  
Everything here's on a grand scale  
including the owner,

    and he's not a man either,  
but a *tool* larger than life,  
    upreared & rampant at the gates!

Conscientiously bringing my mind to bear on this problem  
Gellius,

I have thought more than once  
that the example of Callimachus  
his songs sent you from me  
might ease our relations  
dissuade you from bombarding me  
with offensive squibs,  
all of which, I can see now,  
was wasted hope & effort.

Your darts we shall continue to parry  
– with a pass of the cloak,  
while in our epigrams you stand  
transfixed in ignominy.

## GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES

Names of geographical features and/or familiar place-names which have remained constant, or nearly so, have not been included. Where necessary, substantival forms have been substituted for adjectival ones. The letter 'L', in brackets, stands for 'Lemprière', to whose eminently traditional work the reader is referred for further information.

ACHAIA. Another name for Hellas; a synonym for Greece. (Poem 68)

ACHILLES. (L.) Son of Peleus and Thetis. One of the mightiest of the Greek heroes in the Trojan War. (Poem 64)

ADONIS. (L.) A mortal youth of great beauty who was loved by Venus. (Poem 29)

ARGRUS. (L.) The father of Theseus and King of Athens. Believing his son to have been killed by the Minotaur, he threw himself into the sea, which was subsequently named the Aegean. (Poem 64)

ABMILIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 97)

AESOP. (L.) The sixth-century philosopher and fabulist who, according to tradition, lived at the court of King Croesus. (Poem 28)

AGANIPPE. One of the two springs on Mount Helicon, which were sacred to the Muses. Hippocrene was the other. (Poem 61)

ALECTO. One of the three Furies. (Poem 64)

ALFBNUS. Traditionally, P. Alfenus Varus (*q.v.*). (Poems 10, 30)

AMASTRIS. A port near Cytorus (*q.v.*), and similarly situated. (Poem 4)

AMATHUSIA. Another name for Cyprus, where Venus was particularly worshipped. (Poem 36)

AMEANA. Either Mamurra's mistress, or a prostitute with whom he had dealings, Poem 41 implies she was a Cisalpine.

AMMON. (L.) The present-day oasis of Siwa in Libya. The Egyptian god Ammon was worshipped there as 'Jupiter Ammon'. (Poem 7)

AMOR. Cupid (*q.v.*). (Poems 45, 99)

AMPHITRITE. One of the Nereids, hence the sea. (Poem 64)

ANCON. Latin, Ancona. A town on the Adriatic coast, originally a Greek colony associated with Venus. (Poem 36)

ANDROGEOS. (L.) Son of Minos and Pasiphaë, murdered, by Aegeus, on account of his athletic prowess at the Panathenaic games. (Poem 64)

ANTIMACHUS. (L.) A sixth-century poet, author of an epic poem on the Theban War. In his own day his work was rated second only to that of Homer. (Poem 95)

ANTIUS. Unidentified; apparently involved in a law-suit in which P. Sestius was the prosecutor. (Poem 44)

AONIA. A name for Boeotia. Mount Helicon is situated there. (Poem 61)

APÁME. Berenice's mother, the wife of Magas, King of Cyrene. On her husband's death, she cancelled her daughter's engagement to Ptolemy III (246–221 B.C), and arranged for her to marry his cousin, Demetrius, who, however, devoted his attentions to Apáme rather than Berenice, for which, under Berenice's personal direction, he was assassinated in Apáme's bedroom. Berenice subsequently married Ptolemy III. (Poem 66)

APELIOTA. The East Wind. (Poem 26)

APOLLO. (L.) Often referred to as 'Phoebus' Apollo, and thus identified with the sun, but his sphere of activity is wide. He is patron of the arts, sciences and all civilised activity. He is the son of Jupiter and Latona, and the twin of Diana. (Poem 64)

AQUINUS. A poet of the old-fashioned traditionalist school. He may be the Aquinus mentioned by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* v. 63. (Poem 14)

ARGIVES. (L.) The crew of the Argo; also the inhabitants of the city of Argos, the capital of Argolis, in which sense the word is a synonym for 'Greeks'. (Poem 64)

ARIADNE. (L.) The daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë. She helped Theseus to kill the Minotaur, who was her half-brother. She and

Theseus subsequently eloped; but he abandoned her on the island of Naxos. There she was consoled by Bacchus, who married her, bringing as a wedding present the Corona of seven stars, which bears her name. (Poems 64, 66)

ARRIUS. Traditionally, the self-made Q. Arrius, praetor and supporter of M. Crassus, whom he possibly accompanied to Parthia, a journey which would have entailed an Ionian crossing, such as is referred to in the poem. (Poem 84)

ARSÍNOE. (L.) Berenice's mother-in-law, the wife of Ptolemy II (283–246 B.C.). She was deified and worshipped as a manifestation of Aphrodite. (Poem 66)

ARTEMIS. Latin, Diana (L.). Apollo's twin, virgin goddess of the moon and of hunting. (Poem 64)

ASINIUS. Asinius Marrucinus, brother of C. Asinius Pollio (*q.v.*). (Poem 12)

ATHENE. Latin, Minerva (L.). Goddess of war and wisdom, protectress of Athens. She was said to have sprung fully armed from Jove's head. (Poem 64)

ATTIS. (L.) Archetypal devotee of the Mother Goddess. (Poem 63)

AUFILENUS/AUFILENA. Unidentified, presumably a Veronese brother and sister. (Poems 100, 110, 111)

AURELIUS. Unidentified, possibly a Cisalpine like Furius with whom he is coupled. (Poems 11, 15, 16, 21)

AURORA. (L.) The Dawn. (Poem 64)

AURUNCULEIA, Vinia (*q.v.*). (Poem 61)

BACCHUS. (L.) The God of wine who was the object of an ecstatic cult, similar in many respects to that of Cybele. (Poems 27, 64)

BALBUS. An unidentified Veronese. (Poem 67)

BATTIADES. A descendant of King Battus, a Spartan who built the Libyan city of Cyrene in 630 B.C., and became its first king. The term was used as a patronymic for Callimachus (*q.v.*). (Poem 7)

BBRECYNTHIA. A mountain in Phrygia, associated with the worship of

Cybele. (Poem 63)

BERENICE. (L.) Wife of Ptolemy III. Soon after her marriage her husband left for a campaign in Syria. Berenice placed a lock of her hair in her mother-in-law's shrine at Zephyrium, against his safe return. Unfortunately the lock was lost. The Royal Astronomer, Conon, was consulted, and discovered it as a new constellation, the Coma Berenices. Callimachus wrote a poem to celebrate the event. (Poems 65, 66)

BIBACULUS. M. Furius Bibaculus, a Cremonese, one of the 'new poets'.

BITHYNIA. A Roman province on the south-western shores of the Black Sea. (Poems 10, 25, 31)

BOÖTES. The constellation of Arcturus. (Poem 66)

CAECILIUS. Unidentified, presumably a Cisalpine. The name appears in poems 35 and 67, and may or may not refer to the same person.

CAELIUS. M. Caelius Rufus (*q.v.*). (Poems 58, 100)

CAESAR. (L.) C. Julius Caesar, the dictator; the object of some of Catullus's most virulent epigrams in which the poet ridicules his reputed pederasty and his patronage of Mamurra. (Poems 11, 54, 57, 93)

CAESIUS. An unidentified poet but, like Aquinus, with whom he is linked, evidently a follower of the traditionalist school. (Poem 14)

CALLIMACHUS. (L.) The Greek poet, a native of Cyrene (died 250 B.C.). He lived at Alexandria where he worked in the Library. He was especially admired by the poets of Catullus's circle and wrote the elegant piece of court poetry of which poem 66 is a direct translation. (Poems 65, 116)

CALVUS. C. Licinius Calvus, poet and orator; a close friend of Catullus and a colleague of Cicero. As a writer he is linked by Ovid with Catullus and Tibullus. He was probably a small man, *vide* the last line of poem 53. (Poems 14, 50, 53, 96)

CAMERIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 55)

CASTOR. (L.) One of the Dioscuri (*q.v.*). (Poems 4, 68)

CATO. Almost certainly P. Valerius Cato, a Veronese freedman, born c.100 B.C., poet and man of letters. His influence on his younger contemporaries appears to have been great. He may well have been the original source of the new movement in poetry. (Poem 56)

CATULLUS. C. Valerius Catullus (c. 84 – c. 54 B.C., a Veronese who lived in Rome and was one of the principal figures of the new school of poetry referred to disparagingly by Cicero as ‘the moderns’. They sought to apply Alexandrian criticism and technique to Latin poetry. Catullus is known to have visited Asia Minor for a year, and to have lost a brother in the same part of the world. He was a member of Clodia’s circle, and was accepted by her as one of her lovers. (Poems 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 21, 28, 30, 31, 35, 40, 42, 44, 46, 49, 51, 52, 55, 56, 58, 63, 67, 68, 72, 73, 76, 79, 81, 92, 95, 102)

CHALYBES. (L.) The inhabitants of a region in Asia Minor, near Pontus which was celebrated for its iron mines. (Poem 66)

CHIRON. (L.) The Centaur, Peleus’s grandfather and the future tutor of Achilles. He lived on the slopes of Mount Pelion. (Poem 64)

CICERO. (L.) M. Tullius Cicero, the orator, statesman and author. His year as consul coincided with the Cataline conspiracy. He incurred the enmity of Caesar’s faction and was driven into exile by P. Clodius Pulcher. His speech *Pro Caelio*, defending M. Caelius Rufus, provides us with the only full-length portrait of Clodia. Although he was an intimate of many of Catullus’s friends, poem 49 is the only direct link between the two to have been preserved.

CIEROS. A town in Thessaly. (Poem 64)

CINNA. C. Helvius Cinna, a Cisalpine and friend of Catullus; one of the ‘new poets’. He probably accompanied Catullus, under the patronage of C. Memmius, to Bithynia. He was murdered in the confusion after Caesar’s death in mistake for Cinna the conspirator, as in Shakespeare’s play. (Poems 10, 95, 113)

CLIVUS VICTORIAE. The exclusive residential street on the Palatine, where Clodia and her brother lived. (Poem 37)

CLODIA. (L.) Clodia Metelli, the wife of Q. Metellus Celer, her cousin. She was reputed to have innumerable lovers and, on her husband’s death, was suspected of having poisoned him. Much of Catullus’s most vitriolic as well as some of his tenderest poetry was inspired by her.

CNID OS. A city in Caria in which there were three temples dedicated to Venus. (Poem 36)

COLCHIS. (L.) A region at the far end of the Black Sea. The Argonauts sailed to Colchis, to obtain the Golden Fleece. (Poem 64)

COLOGNA VENETA. A small town near Verona. There used to be a bridge there called *Il Ponte di Catullo*. (Poem 17)

COLOSSUS. (L.) An immense bronze statue a hundred and five feet high, straddling the entrance to the harbour of Rhodes. It was known as one of the wonders of the world. (Poem 4)

COMINIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 108)

CORNELIUS. Cornelius Nepos (*q.v.*). (Poems 1, 67, 102)

CORNIFICIUS. Q. Cornificius, the quaestor (48 B.C., who espoused the Senatorial cause and was killed in battle in 41. He was one of the 'new poets', a friend of Catullus and Cicero. (Poem 38)

CRANNON. One of the principal towns of Thessaly. (Poem 64)

CROESUS. (L.) The fabulously rich king of Lydia. (Poem 115)

CUPID. (L.) The son of Venus, traditionally armed with bow and arrows, who inspires the victims of his archery with erotic passion. In the plural, 'the spirits of love'. (Poems 3, 13, 36, 64, 68)

CYBEBE. Another name for Cybele (*q.v.*). In poem 63, Catullus uses both forms, the first 'e' of 'Cybebe' being long, and that of 'Cybele' short.

CYBELE. (L.) The Mother Goddess. Her cult, which was ecstatic, was of Phrygian origin. It reached Greece in the sixth century B.C., and was introduced into Rome in the Second Punic War. Her temple stood on the Palatine, behind Clodia's house. (Poem 35)

CYCLADES. A group of islands in the Aegean. (Poem 4)

CYCNEA. An old fortress dominating Brescia. (Poem 67)

CYLLENE. A mountain in Arcadia on whose slopes there was a town of the same name. (Poem 68)

CYNTHIA. Another name for Diana (*q.v.*). (Poem 66)



CYTHEREA. (L.) The adjectival form of 'Cythera', the modern Cerigo, an island off the coast of Laconia. According to some authorities, it was the scene of Venus's emergence from the sea. Hence, the was often called 'Cytherea'. (Poem 66)

CYTORUS. A port in Paphlagonia on the borders of Bithynia. It lay at the foot of a mountain of the same name, famous for its boxwood. (Poem 4)

DARDANIA. Another name for the Troad (*q.v.*). (Poem 65)

DELOS. An island in the Cyclades, holy to Diana, who was said to have been born there. (Poem 34)

DELPHOS. (L.) A city in Phocis, said to be situated at the centre of the earth. Its Bacchantes, or female worshippers of Bacchus, were called 'Thyiades'. (Poem 64)

DIANA. (L.) Virgin goddess of the moon and of hunting. (Poem 34)

DINDYMIA. A mountain in Phrygia, associated with Cybele. Hence, another name for the goddess. (Poem 63)

DIOSCURI. Castor and Pollux, twin sons of Jupiter, who protect sailors in times of storm. They constitute the zodiacal sign of Gemini. (Poems 4, 57, 68)

EGNATIUS. Unidentified. (Poems 37, 39)

EMATHIA. Another name for Thessaly, birthplace of Achilles. (Poem 64)

ENDYMION. A mortal youth loved by Diana. In order to keep him to herself she confined him to a cave on Mount Latmos and condemned him to a state of perpetual sleep. (Poem 66)

EPIDAMNUS. The Roman Dyrrachium, modern Durres, a busy crossing-place on the Adriatic. A thriving port would indicate a thriving cult of Venus, hence the reference in poem 36.

ERINYES. (L.) The three Furies. They hound those who disregard natural law, whether intentionally or otherwise. (Poem 64)

ERIUS. An unidentified intimate of Caesar. (Poem 54)

ERYX. A mountain on the west coast of Sicily, where there was a temple dedicated to Venus. (Poem 64)

EUROPA. (L.) The mother, by Jove, of Minos King of Crete. The god appeared to her in the shape of a bull, carried her to Crete and secured her mere under the guardianship of the bronze giant, Talus. (Poem 55)

EUROTAS. A river in Laconia, not far from Sparta. (Poem 64)

EURYSTHEUS. (L.) The cousin of Hercules, who was subject to him. It was Eurystheus who ordered Hercules to perform his twelve labours. (Poem 68)

EUXINE LAKE. The Black Sea. (Poem 64)

FABULLUS. Unidentified. He apparently served in Spain, and possibly in Macedonia, in the same sort, of capacity as Catullus in Bithynia. He is coupled with Veranius. (Poems 12, 13, 28, 47)

FALERNIAN. A type of wine. (Poem 27)

FIRMUM. A town in Picenum, near which Mamurra had an estate. (Poem 114)

FLAVIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 6)

FORMIANUS. Mamurra (*q.v.*). (Poems 41, 43)

FURIUS. Probably M. Furius Bibaculus (*q.v.*). (Poems 11, 16, 23, 24, 26)

GAIUS. Catullus. (Poem 67)

GALLAE. (L.) The priests of Cybele, so called from the river Gallus in Phrygia, whose waters maddened those who drank from it. The Gallae, as a final service to the goddess, castrated themselves during her rite, hence the dramatic change of sex in the poem. (Poem 63)

GALLUS. Unidentified. (Poem 78)

GELLIUS. L. Gellius Poplicola (*q.v.*). (Poems 74, 80, 88, 89, 90, 91, 116)

GOLGOS. Golgi, a town in Cyprus, associated with Venus. (Poems 36, 64)

GUA. The river at Colonia Veneta, once spanned by the *Ponte di Catullo*. (Poem 17)

HAMADRYADS. Tree nymphs, whose life is the physical life of the tree. (Poem 61)

HARPOCRATES. (L.) Hours, the Egyptian child-god of silence. (Poem 102)

HEBE. (L.) Goddess of eternal youth, who was conceived by Juno as the result of a diet of lettuces. She became Hercules's wife after his apotheosis. (Poem 68)

HECAT. (L.) Also called Trivia, since her presence is particularly felt where three roads met. She represents the moon on the wane and, as such, is one of the aspects of Diana. She conducts the souls of dead women to Hades. (Poem 34)

HELEN. (L.) The most beautiful woman in the world, the wife of Menelaus King of Sparta. Her abduction by Paris was the immediate cause of the Trojan War. (Poem 68)

HELICON. A mountain in Boeotia, the home of the Muses and of Hymen. (Poem 61)

HERCULES. (L.) Jove's son by Alcmena. He was the greatest of mortal heroes, celebrated for his twelve labours and subsequent apotheosis. He was also one of the Argonauts. (Poems 55, 68)

HORTALUS (L.) Q. Hortensius Hortalus, praetor and consul, died 50 B.C., a distinguished lawyer and friend of Cicero. Although one of the 'new poets' and the recipient of poems 65 and 66, his verse does not appear to have met with Catullus's approval: *vide* poem 95.

HYMEN. (L.) Also Hymenaeus. The god of marriage, who lives on Mount Helicon in the company of the Muses. (Poems 61, 62, 64)

HYPERBOREI. (L.) A race who lived beyond the region where the North Wind starts to blow, said to be in Thrace. (Poem 115)

HYRCANIA. A wild and desolate country of Asia. (Poem 11)

IDA. (L.) A mountain in the Troad, which was originally part of Phrygia (poem 63), and also (poem 64), a mountain in Crete.

IDALIA. A district in Cyprus where there was a grove sacred to Venus.

(Poems 36, 64)

IPSITHILLA. Unidentified. From the poem (32), almost certainly not a prostitute in our sense, but more likely a hetara, or a freed-woman, whom Catullus knew.

ITYLUS. The Homeric name for Itys (L.), son of Tereus and Procne (*q.v.*). He was killed by his mother, who gave him to his father to eat after she had learnt that Tereus had violated her sister. (Poem 65)

IUVENTIUS. Unidentified. (Poems 24, 48, 81, 99)

JOVE. Jupiter (*q.v.*). (Poems 7, 64, 67, 68)

JUNO. (L.) Queen of Heaven, Jove's wife and sister. (Poems 64, 68)

JUNOLUCINA. Patron of childbirth, an aspect of Diana\* (L.). (Poem 34)

JUPITER. (L.) The father of the gods, and lord of the upper regions, as his two brothers, Neptune and Pluto, are of the sea and the underworld respectively. Neptune was believed to have built the walls of Troy. (Poems 70, 72)

LADAS. One of Alexander the Great's couriers, who ran so swiftly that he left no footprints. (Poem 55)

LAMPSACUS. (L.) A town near the Dardanelles, noted for its oysters and its devotion to Priapus. (Poem 18)

LANUVIUM. A town in Latium. (Poem 39)

LAODAMIA. (L.) The wife of Protesilaus. She was so distressed by the loss of her husband, which occurred almost immediately after their marriage, that she had a life-size statue made of him, which she kept concealed in her bed, and with which she practised a form of hierogamy. When her father heard of this, he ordered the statue to be burnt; but Laodamia proved her loyalty by immolating herself with it. (Poem 68)

LARISSA. A town in Thessaly on the River Peneus. (Poem 64)

LATIUM. A region of Italy. (Poem 57)

LATMOS. A mountain in Caria where Endymion was kept asleep by Diana. (Poem 66)

LATONA. (L.) The mother, by Jupiter, of Diana, to whom she gave birth leaning against an olive tree in Delos. (Poem 34)

LAVINIA. Vinia (*q.v.*).

LESBIA. Clodia Metelli (*q.v.*). (Poems 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 36, 43, 51, 58, 70, 72, 75, 76, 79, 83, 86, 87, 92, 107)

LIBO. An unidentified intimate of Caesar. (Poem 54)

LUCIFER. The light-bringer, the name by which Hesperus, the evening star, is known in the morning. (Poem 62)

MAENAD. A Bacchante, or female devotee of Bacchus; the term was also applied to the worshippers of Cybele. (Poems 63, 64)

MAGUS. A wise man or magician, particularly in reference to the Persians. (Poem 90)

MAMURRA. (L.) Caesar's chief engineer in Gaul, one of the dictator's intimates. He came from Formia in Latium. Hence, Catullus sometimes calls him 'Formianus'. (Poems 29, 57)

MANLIUS. L. Manlius Torquatus (*q.v.*). (Poems 61, 68)

MARCUS TULLIUS. (L.) Marcus Tullius Cicero (*q.v.*). (Poem 49)

MARS. (L.) The god of war, whom Vulcan, the lame blacksmith god, trapped under a net of fine-spun steel, while Mars was enjoying Vulcan's wife, Venus. (Poems, 17, 64)

MEGAERA. One of the three Furies (Poem 64)

MELLA. A river near Brescia. (Poem 67)

MEMMIUS. (L.) C. Memmius Gemellus, praetor in 58 B.C., governor of Bithynia in 57; a patron of Catullus whom he took with him to Bithynia. He was himself a poet of the new school. (Poems 10, 28)

MEMNON. King of Ethiopia, one of the sons of Aurora, the dawn. (Poem 66)

MENENIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 59)

MIDAS. (L.) The Phrygian King who turned all that he touched to gold. (Poem 24)

MINOA. A town in Crete. 'Minoan' is a synonym for 'Cretan', after Minos (L.), the first king. (Poem 64)

NASO. Unidentified. (Poem 112)

NAXOS. (L.) The largest of the Cyclades, where Bacchus was held in particular honour. It was the scene of Theseus's desertion of Ariadne and of her subsequent consolation by Bacchus. (Poem 64)

NEPOS. (L.) Cornelius Nepos, the historian, a friend of Cicero, possibly a Veronese. The *Carmina*, as we have it, is dedicated to him. It is not known whether all the references to 'Cornelius' are to the same person.

NEREIDS. (L.) The Nymphs of the Aegean sea. (Poems 64, 88)

NICAEA. A town in Bithynia. (Poem 46)

NONNIUS. Identification is uncertain, but we know that the curule aedileship for 54 B.C. was awarded to M. Nonnius Sufenas of Pompey's faction. (Poem 52)

OCEAN. (L.) Oceanus, the river-god, husband of Tethys; his waters girdled the earth. (Poems 64, 88)

OLYMPUS. (L.) The home of the gods. A mountain on the borders of Macedonia and Thessaly. (Poems 34, 64, 68)

ORCUS. Pluto, the god of the dead; hence, one of the names for the underworld. (Poem 3)

OREADS. The nymphs of caves and of mountains. (Poem 64)

O'TOOLE. Mamurra (*q.v.*). (Poems 94, 105, 114, 115)

OTTO. An unidentified intimate of Caesar. (Poem 54)

PANATHANAEA. (L.) The yearly sports held at Athens in honour of Athene. (Poem 64)

PARCAE. (L.) The three Fates, who weave the web of man's destiny. (Poem 64)

PARIS. (L.) One of the sons of Priam King of Troy, celebrated for his good looks. His elopement with Helen caused the Trojan War. (Poems 61, 68)

PARNASSUS. (L.) A mountain in Phocis sacred to Apollo and the Muses. (Poems 64, 105)

PARTHIA. A country in Asia, famous for its mounted archers. (Poem 11)

PASITHEA. One of the Graces, betrothed to the god of sleep. (Poem 63)

PHGASUS. (L.) The winged horse who, by stamping with his hoof, created the spring of Hippocrene on Mount Helicon. Hence, he represents the act of poetic creation. (Poem 55)

PELEUS. One of the Argonauts, King of Thessaly and grandson of Chiron the centaur. He was the only mortal to be awarded a goddess, Thetis, for a wife. (Poem 64)

PELION. (L.) A mountain in Thessaly. (Poem 64)

PENELOPE. (L.) Wife of Odysseus. She waited faithfully for twenty years for his return from Troy. (Poem 61)

PENEUS. (L.) A river in Thessaly. (Poem 64)

PERSEUS. (L.) The son of Jupiter and Danae. The winged sandals of Mercury were one of the gifts which the gods gave Perseus so that he could kill the Gorgon, Medusa. (Poem 55)

PESARO. A town on the Adriatic, in the Roman region of Umbria. It was low-lying and unhealthy. (Poem 81)

PHAETON. (L.) The son of Apollo. He was loved by Venus, a fact which made him so conceited that he tried to drive his father's chariot, but perished in the attempt. He fell to earth, landing in the River Po, since when his three sisters, Lampetie, Phaetusa and Lampethusa, who are known as the Heliads, and are, in reality, the poplars which line the river banks, weep tears of amber for their lost brother. (Poem 64)

PHARSALIA. A plain in Thessaly named after the town of Pharsalus. (Poem 64)

PHRYGIA. (L.) A country in Asia Minor, noted for the worship of Cybele. (Poems 46, 63, 64)

PHTHIOTIC TEMPE. (L.) A beautiful valley in Thessaly situated between Olympus and Ossa. It is watered by the River Pencus.

(Poem 64)

PIERIA. Traditionally regarded as the home of poetry. It was a district on the borders of Thessaly and Macedonia. (Poems 65, 68)

PIRAEUS. The harbour about three miles outside Athens. (Poem 64)

PISO. Traditionally, L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, Caesar's father-in-law. (Poems 28, 47)

POLLIO. (L.) 'Pollionus' in the English translation. C. Astnius Pollio, Supporter of Caesar and subsequently of the Triumvirate. He was a distinguished orator, patron and poet. (Poem 12)

POLLUX. (L.) One of the Dioscuri (*q.v.*). (Poems 4, 68)

POLYXENA. (L.) One of Priam's daughters. After the fall of Troy, she was sacrificed by Neoptolemus on his father's (Achilles's) tomb. (Poem 64)

POMPEY. (L.) Cn. Pompeius Magnus, contender with Julius Caesar for sole supremacy of the Roman world (poem 113). The battle of Pharsalia (48 B.C. decided the issue in Caesar's favour. In 55 B.C. he opened a new *piazza* in the Campus Martius. This fact helps to date poem 55.

PONTIC SEA. The Black Sea. (Poems 4, 29)

POPPLICOLA. L. Gellius Poplicola, presumably a rival for Clodia's favours. Later, in 36 B.C., he became consul. He fought for Antony at Actium.

PORCIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 47)

POSTUMIA. Unidentified. It was customary for a male member of a party to preside over the toasts, etc., but for a female most unusual, and suggests licentiousness. (Poem 27)

POSTUMIUS. Unidentified, presumably a Cisalpine. (Poem 67)

PRIAPUS. (L.) The god of gardens and of lust, the most prominent feature of whose statues was a disproportionately large phallus. (Poems 18, 47)

PROCNE. (L.) The wife of Tereus, King of Thrace. When her husband discovered the fate of their son, Itylus (*q.v.*), he tried to kill her, but the gods saved her by turning her into a swallow. (Poem 65)



PROMETHEUS. (L.) The Titan who stole fire – free will – from Heaven and gave it to mankind. Jupiter punished him by chaining him for thirty years to a rock in the Caucasus. Every day an eagle devoured his liver, and every night Jove provided him with a new one. He was finally released by Hercules. (Poem 64)

PROTESILAUS. (L.) The husband of Laodamia. It had been foretold that the first Greek to land at Troy would be killed as soon as he set foot on the beach. Protesilaus knew this, but was nevertheless the first to jump from the boats. (Poem 68)

PTOLEMY III. (L.) (246–221 B.C.), husband of Berenice. The two were cousins, the relationship of brother and sister, referred to in the text, being an erotic honorific, customary in ancient Egypt. (Poem 66)

PULCHER. P. Clodius Pulcher, a notorious associate of Caesar. He succeeded in driving Cicero abroad and then pillaging his house and goods. He profaned the Mysteries of the Mother Goddess by attending them dressed as a woman. He was also said to have committed incest with his sisters. (See in Lemprière under ‘Clodius’.) (Poem 79)

QUINTIA. Unidentified. (Poem 86)

QUINTILIA. Either the wife, the mistress or the betrothed of C.

Licinius Calvus. (Poem 96)

QUINTIUS. Unidentified. (Poems 82,100)

RAVIDUS. Unidentified; a rival for Clodia’s favours. (Poem 40)

RHAMNUSIA. Another name for Nemesis or Fate. (Poem 68)

RHESUS. (L.) The King of Thrace whose horses were renowned for their speed. (Poem 55)

RIVER OF PHEASANTS. Phasis, a river in Colchis that rises in the Caucasus and empties into the Black Sea. It was the home of our European pheasants. (Poem 64)

RUFULUS. Unidentified. (Poem 59)

RUFUS. (L.) M. Caelius Rufus, a disciple of Cicero, who defended him against Clodius Pulcher’s charges of involvement in the Cataline

conspiracy. He was one of Clodia's lovers, but had broken with her by the time of the trial. As he is not known to have come from Cisalpine Gaul the Caelius of poem 100 cannot be referred to him with any certainty. (Poem 77)

SABINE. The Sabini were a neighbouring people who lived between the Nar and the Anio and were ultimately subdued by the Romans. The region near Tibur still preserved their name, but, unlike Tibur, did not provide a fashionable address. (Poems 39, 44)

SACIA. A country in Asia, bordering on the Caspian Sea. (Poem 11)

SAPPHO. (L.) The seventh-century Greek lyric poet (poem 35). Poem 51 is a direct translation of one of her poems. It marks the first known use of the Sapphic metre in Latin.

SATRACHUS. A city and river in Cyprus. (Poem 95)

SATURNALIA. (L.) The midwinter feast of Saturn. People gave each other presents; the shops closed, and an air of licence and merry-making prevailed. (Poem 14)

SATYRS. (L.) Demi-gods with the legs, hooves and horns of goats, who attended on Bacchus. (Poem 64)

SCAMANDER. (L.) One of the principal rivers of the Troad. (Poem 64)

SCYLLA. A twelve-necked monster on the Italian side of the Straits of Messina, opposite Charybdis, the whirlpool. (Poem 60)

SERAP. An Egyptian divinity whose temple stood in the suburbs of Rome. Serapis was identified by Apollodorus with the bull Apis, before whom women used to display themselves as a cure for sterility, and with whose priests they would, for similar purposes, have intercourse. The cult was ratified by Antoninus Pius in 146 A.D., but got out of hand and had to be suppressed. (Poem 10)

SESTIUS. P. Sestius, quaestor in 63 B.C., a close friend and colleague of Cicero. (Poem 44)

SIBYL. (L.) A prophetess of Apollo. The books of the most celebrated, the Cumaean Sibyl, were preserved on the Capitol. (Poem 77)

SILENES. (L.) Another word for Satyrs, and fauns generally. Silenus was a demi-god, Bacchus's principal attendant. (Poem 64)

SILO. Unidentified. (Poem 103)

SIMONIDES. (L.) The Greek lyric poet (556–467 B.C.). (Poem 38)

SIRMIO. The promontory on Lago di Garda where Catullus, or his firther, owned a villa. (Poem 31)

SOCRATION. Unidentified. (Poem 47)

SPARTA. (L.) The capital of Laconia. Helen was the Queen of Sparta.

STYMPHALIA. From Stymphalus the name of a mountain, a town and a lake in Arcadia. It was the scene of Hercules's sixth labour, the slaughter of the man-eating stymphalides, monstrous birds who lived on an island in the lake. (Poem 68)

STYX. (L.) One of the rivers of the underworld. (Poem 65)

SUFFENUS. Unidentified, evidently a poet of the traditionalist school. (Poems 14,22)

SUFFICIO. Unidentified intimate of Caesar. (Poem 54)

SULLA. Unidentified. (Poem 14)

SYRTES. (L.) Shoal water off the North African coast. (Poem 64)

TALASIUS. (L.) The Latin name for Hymen. (Poem 61)

TAPPO. Unidentified. (Poem 104)

TAURUS. A mountain in Asia Minor. (Poem 64)

TELEMACHUS. (L.) The son of Odysseus and Penelope. (Poem 61)

TETHYS. (L.) Sea goddess, wife of Oceanus. (Poems 64, 66, 88)

THALLUS. Unidentified. (Poem 35)

THEMIS. (L.) The goddess of Justice, traditionally depicted with scales and sword. She was the mother of the Parcae. (Poem 68)

THESEUS. (L.) Son of Aegeus King of Athens. He was brought up in Troezen. He sailed to Crete and slew the Minotaur, subsequently eloping with Ariadne whom he abandoned on Naxos – some say in favour of her sister, Phaedra. (Poem 64)

THESPIA. A town in Boeotia, near Mount Helicon. (Poem 61)

THETIS. (L.) A Nereid, wife of Peleus, by whom she bore Achilles. (Poem 64)

THIA. Another name for Macedonia. The Macedonians supported Xerxes' invasion of Greece, and the Ptolemaic dynasty, to whom the word is applied, were of Macedonian origin. (Poem 66)

THYIADES. Another name for Maenads, or Bacchantes, but especially applied to those of Delphos. (Poem 64)

THYNIA. A town in Bithynia. (Poem 31)

TIBUR. Modern Tivoli, a town on the Anio near Rome. It provided a fashionable country-address. (Poems 39, 44)

TISIPHONE. One of the three Furies. (Poem 64)

TORQUATUS. L. Manlius Torquatus, an orator and friend of Cicero. He was a supporter of Pompey; quaestor in 49 B.C.; killed in the Civil War, in North Africa in 47. (Poems 61, 68)

TROAD. The region round Troy. (Poem 68)

TROEZENE. A town in Argolis. Theseus was born and brought up there. (Poem 64)

TROY. A town near the Dardanelles. The scene of the Trojan War, which in Catullus symbolises the close of the age of the gods. (Poems 64, 68)

URANIA. (L.) One of the Muses, patron of astronomy. (Poem 61)

VARUS. P. Alfenus Varus, a Cremonese mentioned by Horace in his first satire as having given up a cobbler's shop for a career in the law courts. He was the first Cisalpine to attain the consulate. (Poems 10, 22)

VATINIUS. (L.) P. Vatinius, quaestor in 63 B.C., tribune in 59, praetor in 55 and consul in 47. He was a supporter of Caesar and a friend of Cicero. He was involved in several court cases in more than one of which Licinius Calvus was the prosecutor. On one occasion, when the case was going against him, Clodius and his henchmen forcibly broke up the proceedings. (Poems 14, 52, 53)

VENUS. (L.) Born of sea-foam. The wife of Vulcan, Mars's mistress,

Cupid's mother. She is the goddess of elemental attraction. (Poems 3, 13, 29, 36, 45, 56, 61, 64, 66, 68, 86, 89)

VERANIUS, Also 'Veraniolus' in the English translation. Like Fabullus (q.v.), a close friend of Catullus. (Poems 12, 28, 47)

VESPER. Another name for Hesperus, or the planet Venus, which, in common with the moon, the sun and the other stars, was thought of as rising behind Mount Oeta in Thessaly. (Poem 62)

VIBENNIUS. Unidentified. (Poem 33)

VICTIUS. Unidentified, (Poem 98)

VINIA. The wife of L. Manlius Torquatus. Otherwise unidentified, (Poems 61)

VIRRO. Unidentified. (Poem 80)

VOLUSIUS. Unidentified. A long-winded poet, presumably contemporary with Catullus. (Poems 36, 95)

VULCAN (L.) The blacksmith god who married Venus. When he was born, his mother, Juno, threw him out of Heaven because he was so ugly. As a result, he broke his leg and has remained lame ever afterwards. At Jupiter's behest he made the first woman on earth, Pandora. He is celebrated for being the only person successfully to make a mockery of Love and War, heavy armour precluding the performance of one and rendering impotent the effects of the other. (Poem 36)

ZEPHYRUS. (L.) The West Wind, brother of Memnon, one of the sons of Aurora, the Dawn. (Poems 26, 46, 64)

ZERITHON. The local name for Pheneus, a town in Arcadia, with a lake of the same name. (Poem 68)

ZMYRNA. The title of a poem by C. Helvius Cinna, probably a miniature epic like the *Peleus and Thetis*. (Poem 95)

\* *Vide* poem 83 and, if the unnamed 'bright-shining goddess' refers to Clodia, 68.

\* Married and unmarried women used different scents, just as they wore their hair differently.

\* It is a tenable theory that many of the goddesses of Greek mythology represent the fragmentation of a pre-Greek female figure in whose person their various functions were originally met.